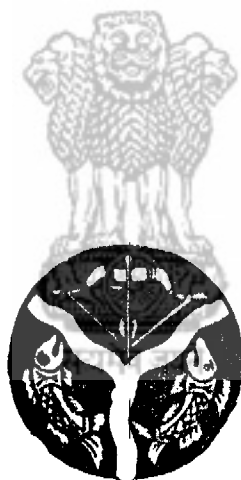


# REPORT

OF

The Committee appointed by the Uttar  
Pradesh Government to enquire into  
the mishap which occurred in the  
Kumbha Mela at Prayaga  
on the 3rd February  
1954



ALLAHABAD

SUPERINTENDENT, PRINTING AND STATIONERY, UTTAR PRADESH, INDIA

1954

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GOVERNMENT OF UTTAR PRADESH

MUNICIPAL (B) DEPARTMENT

No. 55-P/XI-B—69-M/54

*Dated Lucknow, January 10, 1955*

RESOLUTION

READ—Report of the Kumbh Tragedy Enquiry Committee, 1954.

OBSERVATIONS—The Government of Uttar Pradesh are grateful to the Chairman and Members of the Committee for having tackled with ability the important issues which had been referred to them. Government are aware of the large amount of work involved in the collection and examination of the voluminous evidence placed before the Committee ; and take this opportunity to place on record their appreciation of the labour and industry devoted to their task by the Committee in the public interest.

The conclusions and recommendations of the Committee in their Report, which is of inestimable value, are receiving Government's careful consideration.

ORDER—Ordered that the Resolution together with the Report be published in the *Uttar Pradesh Gazette* for general information.

ORDERED also that copies of the Report, and of the Resolution, be released for sale to the public.

By order,

I. D. N. SAHI, I.C.S.,

*Secretary.*

**Report of the Committee appointed by the Uttar Pradesh Government to enquire into the mishap which occurred in the Kumbha Mela at Prayaga on the 3rd February, 1954**

**By the Chairman—**

**I—INTRODUCTORY**

A Kumbha Mela, which takes place every twelve years at the confluence of the rivers Ganga and Yamuna at Allahabad, was held in the months of January and February, 1954. The crowd of bathers in the Kumbha Mela is always larger than that in the ordinary Mágha Mela which takes place every year. This year, for reasons to be stated hereafter, the crowd was much larger than the crowd which has ever assembled before even in a Kumbha Mela. The most important bathing day is the Amávasyá of Mágha. Amávasyá is the last day of the dark half of a lunar month. It fell this year on the 3rd of February. In the morning of that day a very unfortunate mishap occurred in the Mela in consequence of which a number of people were killed and injured. Thereupon the Government of Uttar Pradesh issued the following Notification :

**“MUNICIPAL (B) DEPARTMENT**

**No. 691-P/XI-B—54**

*Dated Lucknow, February 7, 1954*

**NOTIFICATION**

THE Governor has been pleased to appoint a Committee to enquire into the causes of the very unfortunate mishap which occurred on the morning of February 3, 1954, in Kumbha Mela area at Allahabad. The Committee will consist of the following :

*Chairman:*

- (1) Sri Kamalakanta Verma.

*Members:*

- (2) Dr. Panna Lall, Ph.D., LL.D.

- (3) Sri A. C. Mitra, I.S.E., *Chief Engineer, Irrigation.*

Sri Ram Bahadur Saxena, I.A.S., will be the non-member Secretary of the Committee.



2. The terms of reference of the Committee will be—

(i) to examine and ascertain the exact circumstances which resulted in the tragedy,

(ii) to review the arrangements which were made in the Mela this year for the convenience of the millions of people assembled there with a view to finding out if any other measures were possible and suggest ways and means as may be feasible for reducing the risk of such disasters in future.

3. The Committee will have its headquarters at Allahabad.

4. The Committee may visit such places in Allahabad and examine such officials as it considers necessary as well as such other persons who may be willing to assist the Committee.

By order,

K. P. BHARGAVA,

*Chief Secretary to Government,*

*Uttar Pradesh."*

It will thus be noticed that the function of this Committee is :—

*firstly*, to examine and ascertain the exact circumstances which resulted in the tragedy;

*secondly*, to review the arrangements which were made in the Mela this year for the convenience of the millions of people assembled there with a view to finding out if any other measures were possible; and

*thirdly*, to suggest such ways and means as may be feasible for reducing the risk of such disasters in future.

I have considered it necessary to emphasise the precise terms of reference because, at times, it appeared that certain misconceptions had arisen in various quarters and it was thought that the Committee could, and should, take into consideration matters which, in my opinion, were clearly beyond the scope of the terms of reference. For example, it was thought that this Committee should express an opinion as to the correctness or otherwise of the figures given by the officials of the number of deaths that occurred. It also seemed to be felt in certain quarters that the Committee should determine the time when the Mela officials informed those members of the State and Central Governments who were present in Allahabad on the 3rd February

of the happening of this tragedy. It, further, appeared at times that some people were of the opinion that this Committee had a sort of a roving commission which empowered it to examine and comment upon the administrative machinery of the Government. My conclusion is that all such matters are clearly outside our jurisdiction and irrelevant for the purposes of the present enquiry. In my opinion the number of those who were killed is irrelevant for, whatever the number, the Government has considered the matter sufficiently important to justify the appointment of a committee of enquiry and that our duty is to examine and ascertain the exact circumstances which resulted in this tragedy, whether the number of deaths was more, or less, than the number given by the officials. Similarly, any question as to the time when the Mela officials conveyed the news of this tragedy to the Prime Minister or other Ministers or the Governor cannot, in my opinion, be brought within the ambit of this enquiry. Further, it seems to me obvious that this enquiry is not concerned with any such actions or activities of officials, high or low, as cannot be held to have contributed in any manner to the circumstances which led to the tragedy.

It may also be pointed out that this Committee is not a Court. On the one hand, it does not possess the powers which are conferred upon a Court by Statute and, on the other hand, it is not fettered by the rules of evidence and procedure which a Court has to follow. It may be mentioned, however, that throughout the proceedings we kept in view such rules of natural justice as, in our opinion, were likely to enable us to ascertain the truth.

On the arrival of Sri A. C. Mitra the full Committee assembled on the 12th February, 1954. In the meantime, Dr. Panna Lall and I had discussed certain preliminaries and had given necessary instructions to the Secretary. As there was no litigation in any sense of the term and as there were no parties who could give a list of witnesses, it was decided to publish notices in the newspapers inviting all those who were eye-witnesses of the occurrence to send statements in writing containing an accurate and brief account of what was actually seen by them. The first notice which appeared on the 12th February, 1954, was as follows :

“The Committee appointed by the U. P. Government to enquire into the circumstances of the tragedy that occurred in the Kumbh Mela on the 3rd of February, 1954, are anxious

to obtain accurate information concerning the facts of the tragedy from eye-witnesses, that is to say, from those persons who actually saw the occurrence. The Committee will greatly appreciate communications from such persons in English, Hindi, Urdu or any other Indian language, containing a brief account of what was actually seen by the persons sending the communications. It should be sent as soon as possible, preferably within 10 days from the publication of this notice, and should give full name and address of the sender. The Committee may find it necessary to request those sending such communications to take the trouble of appearing before the Committee for the clarification and further elucidation of some of the facts contained in their communications. If so, the Committee will give them timely notice of the date on which and the place where their presence will be required. The communications should be addressed to the undersigned.

R. B. SAXENA, I.A.S.,  
*Secretary,*  
*Kumbh Tragedy Enquiry Committee,*  
*2 Park Road, Allahabad."*

A slight verbal alteration was made in the notices which appeared subsequently and, for the words "preferably within 10 days from the publication of this notice", the words "preferably before 22-2-'54, were substituted. These notices were published in several issues of various newspapers, in English as well as in regional languages, in different parts of the country.

I must here deal with a criticism which was voiced in certain quarters against the notices mentioned above. It was said that the Committee had allowed *only* ten days' time for the submission of the statements in writing and that, having regard to the size of our country and to the fact that pilgrims had come to the Kumbha from all parts of the country, the Committee was wrong in allowing such a short time. In view of the language employed in the notices issued by the Committee, it is difficult to understand this criticism unless we assume that those who raised this criticism never read the notices, or, at any rate, that they did not pay sufficient attention to the words used in them. As has been mentioned above, the relevant words in

the first notice were "*. . . as soon as possible, preferably within ten days. . .*" and in the subsequent notices they were "*. . . as soon as possible, preferably before 22-2-1954*". The criticism was, thus, clearly without foundation.

It may be mentioned that evidently those who wanted to send written statements correctly understood the meaning of the notices mentioned above and written statements kept coming in fairly regularly up to the end of April. It was noticed about the first week of May that the written statements that were now being received were becoming few and far between and so a further notice was published in the papers on the 4th May, 1954, expressing the Committee's appreciation of the assistance which had been extended to it and saying that persons wishing to send statements in writing should send them so as to reach the Secretary of the Committee at the latest by the 15th May, 1954. It was not said even in this notice that written statements received after the 15th May, 1954, would not be accepted. The total number of written statements received was 260 which indicates that the response from the public was adequate and the Committee had ample material for its consideration.

The Committee met again on the 13th February, 1954, and held consultations and discussions. Among other things, it was decided to hold its first public sitting the next day, i.e. on the 14th February, 1954, for the purpose of recording the statements of a number of Mahants and Sadhus who, it was reported to us, would disperse within a few days. It was, further, decided that this sitting should be held in the tent provided for the purpose in the Mela area. The Committee accordingly held the sitting in the Mela area and examined a number of Mahants and Sadhus on the 14th February, 1954. In the meantime, it had been decided that a request be made to the Hon'ble the Chief Justice to permit us to use one of the Court rooms in the High Court building, and the Hon'ble the Chief Justice had very kindly agreed. As Sri A. C. Mitra had to leave for Lucknow on the afternoon of the 14th February to attend to urgent and important official work and, as we considered that it would be advisable to have as many hearings before the full Committee as possible, we resumed our public sittings on the 18th February, 1954, in the High Court building. Thereafter all the sittings were held there.

At this stage it is necessary to mention certain incidents which took place shortly after the resumption of the public sittings of the

Committee as mentioned above. On the 27th February, 1954, as soon as my learned colleagues and I had taken our seats in the Court room, an application, purporting to be on behalf of a lady described as Srimati Chhedni and signed by Sri S. N. Misra, Advocate, was presented before us by the said learned Advocate. We had to point out to Sri S. N. Misra that, the Committee not being a Court and there being no litigation, an Advocate had no *locus standi* and could not present before the Committee a petition on behalf of somebody else. A lady was then produced. She gave her name as Srimati Chhidai and presented the petition. The petition is reproduced below :

“ The Chairman and the Members of the Kumbh Tragedy Enquiry Committee, Allahabad.

Dear Sirs,

I am an old lady of over 60 years and am at present residing at 286 Sunder Ganj Mandi, Muthiganj, Allahabad.

In pursuance of the well advertised welcome and the declarations by the Government that excellent arrangements were being made on the Kumbh day and in the Kumbh city at Allahabad, 8 members of the family of the applicant went to have their bath on 3rd February, 1954. The applicant, who is the most unfortunate on account of her age, could not go and remained at home. The 8 members including the applicant's son on whom the applicant depended for her livelihood and son's wife and others completely perished in the tragedy only on account of the deliberate and inefficient and discriminatory arrangements made by the Government and the officers concerned. The entire attention was diverted of the authorities of looking after the very important personalities and there was absolutely no arrangements for the safety of the citizens who were assured of the best and safe arrangements and thus has resulted the complete ruin of the applicant's family and 8 members of the applicant's family were killed outright. The dead bodies of these 8 persons, Mewa Lal, his wife, Srimati Shanti Devi, Shanti Devi's child, Srimati Gujri, Srimati Ramani, Srimati Ramani's son and Srimati Kaushila, were brought by the Police the following day at 9.30 a.m. and the Government and the officials are directly responsible for this deliberate neglect

of duty and inefficient and inadequate arrangements knowing full well that about 50 lakhs of people were expected.

The applicant has served a notice under section 80 upon the State Government and the Central Government and the Collector of Allahabad and will be instituting a suit for damages against the said parties.

The present enquiry is being conducted to shield the deliberate mis-management, inefficient and discriminate arrangements and thus save the Government from serious damages payable to the suffered persons like the applicant. Witnesses are being examined to establish one-sided version and majority of them are the officials who are themselves to be blamed and there is absolutely no agency to cross-examine and bring out the truth from even those interested witnesses.

As the applicant's suit is likely to be very adversely effected by the findings of this Commission of Enquiry whether quasi-judicial or purely executive and homely and, therefore, it is imperative in fairness and in the interest of justice that the applicant should be permitted to nominate Sri S. N. Misra and Sri I. N. Misra as her counsel to participate in the proceedings and cross-examine the witnesses and produce such witnesses as may be necessary to bring out the truth. In the event the said permission permitting the counsel to appear is not granted, then a note may be made that the applicant did make an application to the Commission of Enquiry and that the said permission has been refused so that the applicant may be able to take appropriate proceedings in Courts.

Yours faithfully,"

The mark of a thumb impression appeared below the words 'Yours faithfully' and the words 'Srimati Chhedni' were typed within brackets just below the thumb impression and her address was given as 286, Sunderganj Mandi, Muthiganj, Allahabad. The application, further, bore the signature of Sri S. N. Misra, Advocate, and was dated the 27-2-'54. The lady was then examined, and the following order, in which the gist of her depo-

sition is given, was pronounced immediately after her examination :—

“ 27th February, 1954.

This application has been presented by a lady giving her name as Srimati Chhidai. It is signed by Sri S. N. Misra, Advocate. There is a thumb mark on the application purporting to be the thumb mark of the lady. The lady states that eight persons of her family were killed in the tragedy which occurred on the Amávasyá day. When questioned what she wanted, she stated that she wanted that suitable arrangements be made for her maintenance. It was explained to her that this Committee had no power to make any such arrangements. When she had understood this, she said : “Very good”.

Questioned further if it was her opinion that the members of this Committee were dishonest and would deliberately arrive at wrong conclusions, she answered : “No, Sir”.

The next question put to her was whether she knew the purpose for which this Committee had been formed. She answered : “God knows (Bhagwán Jane)”.

Another question put to her was whether, in her opinion, this Committee had been formed with the object of protecting and shielding the officials. She answered : “I do not know. I am in great sorrow.”

The question was repeated whether she considered the members of the Committee to be dishonest. She said : “No, Bhayyá (Náhin Bhayyá)”. She was then told by the Chairman that the proper course for her, in order to get maintenance for herself, was either to bring a suit in the appropriate court or to send up a petition to the Government, if she was advised to take either of these courses.

The request made in the application that any Advocates on her behalf be permitted to participate in the proceedings and to cross-examine the witnesses and produce such witnesses as may be necessary cannot be granted. It was explained to Sri S. N. Misra, earlier in the day, when he wanted to present the application himself, that this Committee was not, in any sense of the term, a court of law, that there was no litigation and there were no parties and that thus a counsel had no *locus standi*.”

It seems to me that any comment on the true character of this application and the object with which it would appear to have been filed is superfluous.

The next incident which has to be mentioned is this. A letter, dated the 12th February, 1954, was received from the Honorary Secretary of the Advocates' Association, High Court, Allahabad, stating that, at an 'emergent meeting'—the meaning, evidently, being an emergency or, possibly, extraordinary meeting—of the Association held on that day, the following resolution was passed :

"This Association is of opinion that in order to bring out true facts before the Enquiry Committee appointed by the Government to enquire into Kumbh Mela incident of 3rd February 1954, it is necessary that some lawyers be permitted to appear as *amicus curie* and put questions to witnesses, serve interrogatories on witness, call for reports and documents concerning the incident and do such other things as may be necessary to help the Enquiry Committee.

This Association deputes 8 lawyers with power to co-opt up to 3 more to take up this work and request the Enquiry Committee to permit them to appear before it for the said purpose."

It was requested that the Committee should allow the lawyers appointed by the Association "to associate with and assist" the Committee in the course of the enquiry. The names of the lawyers appointed by the Association were, however, not given. In the course of the correspondence which ensued, the Honorary Secretary of the Advocates' Association was requested to nominate three of their members to represent the Association in this matter and the Honorary Secretary of the Association replied that Sri A. P. Pandey, Sri Shiv Charan Lal and Sri P. C. Chaturvedi had been nominated "out of the panel of eight" for the purpose.

My learned colleagues and I gave to this matter our careful consideration and came to the conclusion that the request, as made, could not be granted because, there being no *curiae*, no question of Advocates appearing *amicus curiae* could arise. Furthermore, it seemed to us that no Advocate, as such, could have any *locus standi* before the Committee. An Advocate, when appearing as an Advocate, has to be appointed by or on behalf of a person who is a party to a proceeding of which cognizance has been taken by a tribunal



appointed under some law in order that the Advocate might represent that person before that tribunal. None of these conditions applied to this Committee or to the enquiry which it had to conduct. We decided, however, to permit the Advocates nominated by the Advocates' Association to suggest to us questions to be put to a witness if, after being present during the examination of that witness, they felt that some point relevant to this enquiry had not been covered by the questions put to the witness by the members of the Committee. We also decided that they should be asked to note down such questions on a piece of paper and hand it up to us and that, if it appeared to us that the questions thus suggested related to relevant points which had not already been covered by the questions put by us to the witness, we would put those questions. The Secretary of the Committee was, accordingly, directed to write to the Honorary Secretary of the Advocates' Association saying that the Chairman of the Committee would be glad to meet the gentlemen who had been nominated — one or two or all the three of them, whichever might be possible — on March 4, 1954, in his Chambers in the High Court building at any time that might be convenient to them between the hours of 10.30 a.m. and 1 p.m. The Secretary was further directed to say that it would be greatly appreciated if one of the office-bearers of the Association, e.g. the Honorary Secretary or one of the Vice-Presidents, would also accompany them. Accordingly, Sri A. P. Pandey and Sri Shiv Charan Lal saw me on the 4th March, 1954, and they were accompanied by Sri Surendranath Varma, the Honorary Secretary of the Advocates' Association. I explained to them in detail the decisions arrived at by the Committee and the reasons therefor. They were told that the Committee would be glad to take into consideration any questions suggested in the manner mentioned above by any of the Advocates already appointed by the Association and that any question or questions on a point or points relevant to the enquiry which in the opinion of the Committee had not been covered by the questions already put to the witness by the members of the Committee would be put. No member of the Advocates' Association, however, ever suggested any questions. In fact, to the best of my recollection, none of the gentlemen nominated by the Association ever attended any of the sittings of the Committee while witnesses were being examined.

It may be mentioned that some of the representatives of the press now and then suggested questions to be put to the witness under

examination. They followed the procedure laid down by the Committee and wrote down the questions and handed up the paper to the Secretary who passed it on to the members of the Committee. Whenever any question thus suggested fulfilled the requirements already mentioned, it was put to the witness. In fact, on one occasion the question suggested did not relate to a relevant matter and this was pointed out by me to the gentleman who had suggested it. He expressed a desire that the question might be put as the witness under examination had made some mention of the matter at an earlier stage of his examination and it had not been taken down. This, by itself, was not a valid reason for the question being admitted, but it was felt by me as well as the learned member who was sitting with me on that day that the question related to a matter about which there was some feeling in the mind of a certain section of the public and so the question was put and the witness's answer was recorded. No one else suggested any questions.

One more incident might be mentioned. A body called The Kumbh Tragedy Fact Finding Committee had been formed by certain citizens of Allahabad with Sri R. N. Basu, Advocate, as President, Sri Narottam Das Tandon, M.L.C., as Secretary and Sri Sarwar Husain as Joint Secretary. Among its members were Sri K. K. Bhattacharya, Sri Kalyan Chand Mohiley, M.L.A., Sri Saligram Jaiswal, Sri Naunihal Singh and Dr. S. N. Basu. Some time after the commencement of the public sittings of the Committee, Sri R. N. Basu and Sri Narottam Das Tandon came and saw me at my house. There was a third gentleman with them, but I do not remember his name. They suggested that lawyers might be allowed to appear and to cross-examine the witnesses examined by the Committee. I explained to them that this was not possible and gave them the reasons which have already been mentioned. They then enquired if we would be prepared to admit the material collected by their Committee if it was forwarded to us. I pointed out that the Committee of which I had the honour to be the Chairman was anxious to obtain all such material as would enable it to arrive at correct conclusions and assured them that all such material forwarded by them as was relevant to the enquiry which we had been asked to conduct would be admitted. They did not, however, forward anything to us.

## II—THE BACKGROUND

(a) *The Kumbha Mela.*

A great deal has been, and can be, said and written about the origin and significance of the bathing festival known as the Kumbha Mela. Apart from what we knew—or thought we knew—we considered it proper to request a number of Sanskrit scholars and astrologers to assist us in our study of the subject in all its aspects—historical, religious and astrological. A comprehensive questionnaire was sent to each of these gentlemen with the request that they might kindly send to the Committee notes in writing embodying their answers to the questions contained in it. Several of them responded and sent their notes, and I take this opportunity of expressing, on behalf of my learned colleagues and on my own behalf, our deep gratitude for the valuable assistance that they have thus rendered to the Committee. Various standard works which could throw any light on the subject have also been consulted. After a careful consideration and analysis of all the material, I have come to the conclusion that, for the purposes of this Report, it is not necessary to go into the matter in any great detail. I propose, therefore, to deal with it as briefly as possible.

The inhabitants of India—using that name in the sense in which it was used before 1947—have, from time immemorial, been great lovers of water. Apart from other evidence, the discoveries made by the Archaeological Department at Mohenjo-Daro in Sindh and Harappa in the Punjab furnish ample and striking evidence in support of this view. In all likelihood, this began with an appreciation of the manifold qualities—notably the cleansing properties—possessed by water and of the great benefits which it confers on man. As J. Talboys Wheeler, the author of that monumental work, “The History of India from the Earliest Ages”, observes, “it purifies, and it is an emblem of purity, and is as necessary in every household as fire”. From a realisation of the purifying qualities possessed by water so far as the body was concerned, it was not a very long step to the belief that its use was beneficial spiritually also. The layout and construction of the Great Bath of Mohenjo-Daro, described in detail by Sir John Marshall, suggest that bathing had some ceremonial significance in the life of the people of Mohenjo-Daro. This reverence for water was not peculiar to the inhabitants of this country, Aryan as well as pre-Aryan.

Bathing, or washing, for some purpose or other, is prescribed in almost all the great religions of the world. To quote Talboys Wheeler again, "next to fire, perhaps water has always occupied the most prominent place in the religious worship of nations in general".

Confining ourselves to India, we find that in the Vedic hymns prayers are often offered to Varuna, the deity of water. Our ancestors looked upon all those things which conferred benefits on humanity as gifts from the Almighty and personified, even deified them. Wells, tanks and rivers—everything which supplied water—became objects of veneration. Rivers, however, for obvious reasons, commanded reverence in a special degree. "The ever-flowing current of a great river awakens ideas of life and infinity ; of a past and a future ; of going on ever and ever, we know not whence and we know not where, but ever flowing." It will be sufficient to refer to one hymn of the Rig Veda. It is *sukta* (hymn) no. 75 of the tenth Mandal (book). The *Devatā* (deity) of this *sukta* is shown in the books as "नद्यः" (Rivers). No such information was originally given about any *sukta*, but the books which are now available, mention not only the *devatā* but also the *rishi* and the kind of metre (*chhandas*) in headings printed at the top of each hymn. These particulars have been obtained from certain *anukramanis* (tables of contents or indexes) prepared by various scholars at various times. It is believed that Shaunaka, a great scholar, who is said to have flourished between 800 and 1,000 B. C., was the first to prepare an *anukramani* giving all this information. Thus the *devatās* of this hymn are "Rivers", and the whole hymn is devoted to various rivers. It consists of nine *mantras* (verses) and eight of them deal with the qualities of the river Sindhu (the modern Indus), while one—*mantra* no. 5\* — invokes a number of other rivers, including the five rivers of the Punjab (Sutlej, Ravi, Chenab, Jhelum and Beas), the tributaries of some of them, and the Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati. It is not necessary to discuss the question whether the Saraswati mentioned here is the same Saraswati as is said to join the confluence of the Ganga and the Yamuna at Prayaga to form Triveni Sangam, although there is the fact that in a Khila (which, according to Apte's as well as Monier Williams's Sanskrit English Dictionary, means an additional hymn appended to the regular collection) added at the end of the ninth Mandal of the Rig Veda, a *prāchi* (eastern) Saraswati is mentioned

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\*इमं मे गङ्गा यमुने सरस्वति शुशुभि स्तोमं सधता पदण्य ।  
असिन्व्या मरुद्वधे वितस्तयार्जकीये शृणुद्वा सुषोमया ।

as being in the place where the Ganga and Yamuna are.\* This Khila is said to have been added to the Rig Veda sometime between 600 and 300 B.C., while it appears that, according to eminent Vedic scholars, the tenth Mandal had certainly come into being by 1,500 B.C. and, probably, very much earlier. It seems to me that, at the time when the tenth Mandal of the Rig Veda came into existence, the Aryans were impressed more by the river Sindhu (Indus) than by any other river. That is why, although the Ganga and the Yamuna are mentioned at the beginning of *mantra* no. 5 of the 75th *sukta* of that Mandal, the remaining *mantras* are devoted entirely to the grandeur of the Sindhu. It was only when, in course of time, the Aryans became fully acquainted with that part of the country which may be described as the Gangetic plain that they realised the grandeur and the qualities of the Ganga. Then they gave her the highest position. She came to be regarded as the holiest river and was called Sursari (the river of the gods). This may have been due partly to the fact that those ancient people had discovered—what European scientists discovered in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries A. D. by laboratory tests—the remarkable properties possessed by Ganga Jal, the Ganga water.

Next, in the affection and the veneration felt by the people, came the river Yamuna. This may have been partly due to the fact that she was so intimately associated with the early life of Lord Sri Krishna. It appears that the Vedic Rishis believed that the confluence of any two or more rivers was a sacred place. In support of this, it will be sufficient to quote one *mantra* from the Rig Veda, viz. the 28th *mantra* of the 6th *sukta* in the 8th Mandal.† At first sight it seems difficult to understand the meaning of this *mantra* until one realises that the *devata* of this *sukta* is Indra and reads this *mantra* in the light of the other *mantras* of this *sukta*. One is then able to understand why 'vipra' was rendered as Medhāvi Indra by Sáyana whom many modern translators have followed. It may be mentioned that Sáyana was a great scholar who flourished in the fourteenth century A. D. and was under the patronage of Bukka I, the founder of the great Vijayanagara Empire. Thus the *mantra* may be translated as follows :  
By the performance of *yajna* or by the chanting of devotional

---

यत्र गंगा च यमुना च यत्र प्राची सरस्वती ।

यत्र सोमेध्वरो देवस्तत्र माममृतं कृषीन्द्रायेन्दो परिलभ ।।

† उपह्वरे गिरीणां सङ्गथे च नवीनाम् । धिया विप्रो अजायत ॥

*mantras* in mountainous regions and at the confluence of rivers, Medhāvī Indra was born." Sayana, in his commentary on this *mantra*, adds: "Therefore, we too should perform *yajnas* or chant devotional *mantras* in such regions." It is obvious that a place where three sacred rivers—the Ganga, the Yamuna and the Saraswati—met came to be considered as a very sacred spot. We see the Ganga and the Yamuna, but the tradition is that there was a third river called the Saraswati which also joined them at their confluence. The Saraswati is no longer visible, but the following passage, which occurs in Chapter V of the Gazetteer of the district of Allahabad, lends support to the view that a third river did at one time exist at this place: "The Tribeni or junction of the three rivers, Ganges, Jumna and Saraswati, became celebrated as Prayāga or the place of sacrifice in very remote times, not improbably at an epoch when three rivers existed in reality. The legend of the Saraswati is not only very old but very widely diffused, and the oft-observed phenomenon of subterranean channels in the centre of the Duáb lends colour to the theory that at one time an actual and visible river flowed between the Ganges and the Jumna." 'Duáb' means a tract lying between two rivers. The ancient Rishis—for reasons presently to be stated—called this place Prayāga and came to it to bathe and many of them took up their residence in its neighbourhood because they believed that by residing near the confluence they would be the better able to do their *tapasyā* (penance and meditation). It will be sufficient to mention the name of one of them, namely Bhāradwaj, whose Āshram (hermitage) is said to have stood at a site in the locality now known as Colonelganj (*vide* map of Allahabad appended hereto, marked I). I have indicated it in the map by means of a rectangle in blue pencil. The land between the two rivers, up to a certain distance from the confluence, expressed in Yojans in the scriptures, was considered to be Prayāga. Roughly speaking, it is the tract upon which the town of Allahabad is now situated, extending in the west up to the place where we now have the Macpherson Park (*vide* map marked I) and bounded by the two rivers in other directions.

Prayāga consists of two syllables, *Pra* and *Yāga*. The prefix *Pra* conveys the ideas, among others, of extensiveness, intensiveness and excellence. *Yāga* means *yajna* which has been translated, not very happily, as sacrifice.

The ceremony of *yajna* consisted, in the main, of making offerings to the deity or deities and the offerings were put into the sacred fire, which was kindled for the purpose, to the accompaniment of the solemn chanting of Vedic *mantras*. It was believed that fire (*Agni*), who also was one of the important deities, was the best medium for the offerings to reach the deity or deities to whom the offerings were made. In a sense, it was a sacrifice. The idea of sacrifice was developed further and it came to be believed that the greater the value of the thing sacrificed the greater the merit, so much so that, in spite of the fact that the pure Vedic religion condemns suicide in no uncertain terms, the belief, that one would be doing a highly meritorious act if one made the supreme sacrifice of giving up the physical body at Prayāga, was propagated in the post-Vedic period. There are passages in the Mahābhārat, in some of the Purānas and in the Dharmaśāstra Nibandhas which extol self-immolation at Prayāga. There is also a Khila\* on Adhyaya 8, Sukta 3, Mantra 6 of the Rig Veda which may be translated thus :

“Where the two rivers, white and non-white, commingle,  
bathing there people go up to heaven and those brave ones  
who shed their body there attain to immortality.”

(In translating the phrase ‘सितासिते’ I have considered it best to give the literal meaning, i.e. white and non-white). The Khilas, of course, are subsequent additions, as has already been indicated above. The words ‘tanvam visrijanti’ do not necessarily convey the idea of suicide. They only mean ‘give up the body’. It is a historical fact, however, that, in course of time, the verse came to be interpreted as recommending suicide and that some kings, sages and *mahātmās* deliberately immolated their bodies at Prayāga, generally after they had attained the age of 100 years.† It will be sufficient to mention the name of the great Vedic scholar, Kumarila Bhatta, who is said to have destroyed his body by fire at Prayāga. It is possible that what led to this interpretation being put on the verse by

\*सितासिते सरिते यत्र संगथे तत्राप्लुतासौ विवमृत्वतन्ति।

ये वै तन्वं विसृजन्ति धीरास्ते जनासौ अमृतत्वं भजन्ते ॥

† There is a learned and illuminating article by Sri Kāhetresachandra Chattopadhyaya, Reader in Sanskrit, Allahabad University, in the Journal of the United Provinces Historical Society for July 1937, Volume X, Part I, under the heading : “Religious Suicide at Prayāga”. It deals with the subject in a comprehensive manner.

some people was the fact that, on the one hand, they firmly believed that death at Prayaga would lead to salvation and, on the other hand, they entertained the fear that it might not be their good fortune to be at Prayaga when death came to them in the usual course of nature. The practice of taking active steps to destroy the body at Prayaga, however, never became common. The practice that did gain prevalence was that of sacrificing one's wealth by giving alms to the poor and the needy. The largesse distributed by King Harshavardhana every five years at Prayaga has become proverbial and has been described in great detail by the Chinese traveller, Hiuen-Tsiang. The belief that took firm hold in the minds of the people was that even the smallest gift made at Prayaga was far greater in excellence than that made at any other place, howsoever large the latter might be.

Religious ceremonial in Vedic times consisted mostly of the performance of *yajnas* and all those who were desirous of gaining merit and thereby acquiring sufficient strength for achieving some purpose, spiritual or temporal, performed *yajna*, and the extent of the strength thus gained depended upon the extent and the quality of the *yajna*. All religious ceremonies had to be preceded by bathing and the holier the place where the bathing and the *yajna* took place the greater the merit and the strength acquired. As mentioned above, in course of time, Prayaga came to be considered as the most holy spot in the whole of Bháratvarsha and, therefore, as the most suitable place for the performance of *yajnas* after bathing in the holy Sangam. It was given the title of *Tirtharāj*—the king among the places of pilgrimage. It was referred to by this title in the Mahábhárat, if not earlier. Then came the period of the Puránas, and several of them devote considerable space to Prayaga Mhátmya—description of the greatness and the peculiar virtues of Prayaga as a Tírtha or place of pilgrimage. Separate treatises were written dealing with Prayaga Mhátmya. It was said that even the gods—Brahmá, the Creator, among them—performed a series of great *yajnas* at Prayaga.

The word 'tirtha' means that which enables one to go across. It is applied to the place, the thing or the person—a Guru or Preceptor—which or who enables one to go across. It thus conveys the idea of a place or a thing or a person which or who enables human beings to cross Bhavaságara—the ocean of existence—and thus to achieve Moksha, salvation.



Apart from the performance of *yajnas*, the steps laid down by the great sages for the attainment of the highest beatitude, Moksha—which is the final goal of life—are *tattva-chintana* (meditation on the Supreme Reality or Parmátman), *adhyátma-shástra-vichára* (deliberations about the rules concerning knowledge of Parmátmá), *mantra-japa* (verbal repetitions of a sacred formula) and *tirtha-yátrá* (pilgrimage to a sacred place, particularly one situated on the banks of a river). The first three as well as the performance of *yajnas* require attainments, qualities and resources which are beyond the reach of the common people. Therefore, great emphasis came to be laid on *tirtha-yátrá* which demands only *shraddhá*, true faith and devotion, and that is within the reach of all. The greatest good of the greatest number was the object. If there was in that place a holy river, tank or even well in which the pilgrim could bathe, merit was acquired by bathing in it. As Tirtharáj Prayága had Triveni Sangam, the confluence of three sacred rivers, a journey to Prayága and bathing in the Sangam came to be regarded as sufficient for acquiring the highest spiritual merit. The belief in the efficacy of pilgrimage to Prayága and bathing in the Sangam was strengthened by the fact that so many sages and mahatmas had been residing and performing *tapasyá* at or near Prayaga and had bathed in the Sangam. It was considered that a place which sages and mahátmas, and even gods, had selected for their *tapasyá* and *yajna* must be an extremely sacred spot and, further, that the sages, mahátmas and gods, by residing at, and visiting, Prayaga, must have added to its already existing sanctity. It may be mentioned here that the great poet Kalidása, who flourished about the fifth century A. D., has dwelt on the beauties and grandeur of the Sangam at Prayága in glowing verses in his *Raghuvansha*.

It is hardly necessary to point out that the idea of pilgrimage as a means of acquiring religious merit is common to all religions.

In ancient times no particular season or month or date appears to have been prescribed for the pilgrimage to, and the bathing at, Prayaga. It seems highly probable that the belief, that bathing in the Sangam in the month of Mágha was beneficial, developed with the growth of the study and knowledge of astrology. It had apparently been believed even in ancient times that Uttaráyana was a very auspicious period. Uttaráyana—Sanskrit : उत्तर अयन=उत्तरायण, meaning “going to the north”—is the period of six months between

the winter solstice and the summer solstice. According to European astronomers, the winter solstice occurs on the 21st December and the summer solstice on the 21st June, but Indian astrologers—for reasons which need not be gone into—maintain that the date of the winter solstice is the 14th January (and on rare occasions the 13th January) and that of the summer solstice is the 14th July. Thus, according to Indian astrologers, Uttarayana begins when the sun enters Makara Ráshi (the sign of Capricornus) and ends when the sun enters Karka Ráshi (the sign of Cancer). During this period the sun appears to move continuously northwards, the furthest point being reached on the summer solstice day, and thereafter appears to move southwards, the furthest point being reached on the winter solstice day. The sun stays in each Ráshi for one month. The first of the six months of Uttaráyana, that is, the period during which the sun remains in Makara Ráshi, is considered to be the best for the performance of religious ceremonies. Thus, the period of one month commencing from the sun's entry into the Makara Ráshi—which generally occurs on the 14th January but sometimes, though seldom, on the 13th January—and continuing up to the sun's departure from that Ráshi and entry into the next Ráshi, Kumbha (Aquarius), came to be regarded as the best time for bathing in the Sangam at Prayaga. It does not necessarily extend from the first day of the month of Mágha to its last day, but the major portion of the month of Mágha usually falls within it. That evidently was the reason why it came to be known as Mágha Snán. Strictly speaking, the correct name is Makara Snán. Those who are strict in their religious observances look upon the month which lasts from Makara Sankranti to the Kumbha Sankranti as the proper period, whatever portion of Mágha might be covered by it.

It may be pointed out that, when the sun enters the Makara Ráshi and assumes the Uttarayana aspect, it begins to regain its lustre and strength which had waned during the winter months. Thus, Makara Sankranti marks the beginning of the end of winter and heralds the advent of spring, and this has always been treated as an occasion for rejoicing and celebration practically all over the world. It is possible that this circumstance also influenced the sages in fixing upon Makara Sankranti as the date on which the bathing festival at Prayága should begin. It must be remembered that in our country every celebration

is preceded by a religious ceremony in some form or other and that a religious ceremony has to be preceded by bathing.

The belief that Amavasya is the most auspicious day for bathing in the Sangam is also the result of the development of the science of astrology. To put it briefly, it is believed that the Sun is the lord of the soul and that the Moon is the lord of the mind. So, it is believed that the day on which both the Sun and the Moon are of equal degree (*ansha*) in Makara Ráshi is the most auspicious for bathing in the Sangam. That day is the Amávasyá falling during the period that the Sun is in Makara Ráshi, for Amávasyá (the last day of the dark half of every lunar month) comes round when both the Sun and the Moon are of equal degree at the time of their conjunction in each Ráshi. As has already been mentioned, the Sun stays in each Ráshi for one month and thus—there being twelve Ráshis—comes back to each Ráshi after one year. The Moon stays in each Ráshi only for  $2\frac{1}{4}$  days and so goes round all the twelve Ráshis roughly once in twenty-seven days. Consequently, the conjunction of the Sun and the Moon in equal degree in Makara Ráshi can take place only on that Amavasya which falls during that period of one month in which the Sun is in Makara Ráshi. Thus, this Amavasyá became the most important day for bathing in the Sangam at Prayaga.

It appears that for a considerable length of time matters stood as stated above. Exactly when and how the idea, that the bathing festival during the one month described above should, at intervals of twelve years, be regarded as a more important occasion and should be called the Kumbha Snán, was developed is not quite clear. There seems to be no doubt, however, that it is a later development. It appears that even the older Puránas do not mention it. Even the reason for the name Kumbha seems to be obscure. The opinions received by us on the subject are not quite unanimous, but it may be safely asserted that this institution of Kumbha Snan also owes its origin to astrology. Having carefully examined the materials placed before us, I have come to the conclusion that it is not necessary to go into the astrological intricacies and that the matter can be put very shortly thus. The planet Jupiter is considered to be the lord of the intellect and the position of this planet relatively to the positions of the Sun and the Moon is responsible for bringing about what is known as Kumbha Snán. It is believed that, when the lords of the soul

the mind and the intellect stand in a certain relationship to one another, the period of one month during which the festival of bathing in the Sangam at Prayága is held becomes more important. This relationship of these three planets as a rule occurs every twelve years, but it appears that the interval may, though very rarely, be eleven or thirteen years. It cannot, however, be less than eleven or more than thirteen. For a long time past the Kumbhs at Prayága have been occurring at regular intervals of twelve years. Not to go back beyond the eighties of the last century, Kumbha Snáns have taken place at Prayága in 1882, 1894, 1906, 1918, 1930, 1942 and, lastly, 1954. I have not considered it necessary to repeat the story of the pitcher of nectar. About the time of the last Kumbha Mela the newspapers printed so many articles, written by so many contributors, in which that story was narrated, that every citizen of India must have become thoroughly familiar with it. It is, to my mind, clear that it is allegorical—as so many things said and written by the ancients are—and that the best commentary on it is the one attributed to Sri Shankaracharya that the fight between the Devas (gods) and the Asuras (demons) for the possession of the pitcher containing the nectar represents the struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil which is constantly taking place in every human being's heart and that the nectar represents Brahman—the Supreme Being, by whatever name we call Him: If the forces of good are victorious, then the individual realises Brahman, but if the forces of evil triumph, then He remains hidden by the veil of *avidyá* i.e. *Máya* (illusion).

(b) *The Kumbha of 1954.*

It is perfectly clear that this year's Kumbha was considered to be one of special significance and great importance. This, too, was the result of the predictions and the dicta of the astrologers and the Pandits in all parts of the country. Without going into details, the reason on which these predictions and dicta were based may be summarised as follows :

- (1) The Purnima (full moon) of the month of Paush, which followed the Makara Sankranti (14th January), began this year on a Monday (18th January). This is considered to be an auspicious event. It may be explained here that the Purnimá commenced at 7.50 a.m. on the 18th January and lasted up to 7.29 a.m. on the 19th January. As it commenced after sunrise on

the 18th January and lasted till after sunrise on the 19th January, the fast (*vrat*) was observed on Monday, the 18th January, and the bathing and the giving of alms (*Snan* and *Dán*) took place on the 19th January, for the proper time to bathe on such occasions is when the Sun starts rising (at *Arunodaya*—dawn) and the giving of alms follows the bathing.

(2) There was *Chōōrámani Yóga* in connection with the lunar eclipse which occurred on the night between the 18th and the 19th January ; in other words, the Moon set on the morning of the 19th January while it was still eclipsed. This is considered to be an extremely auspicious event. It is also very rare. *Chooramani Yóga* itself is an unusual phenomenon, and its occurrence during the month of *Magha Snán*, i.e., *Makara Más*, is extremely rare.

(3) The *Amávasyá*, which, as explained above, is the most important bathing day, becomes doubly important when a *Chōōrámani Yóga* occurs on the preceding *Púrnimá*.

(4) The fact that this year's *Amávasyá* fell on a Wednesday was considered to have great significance.

(5) *Shravana Nakshatra*, which is a very auspicious *Nakshatra*, began during the night between the 2nd and the 3rd February and lasted the whole of the following day and for some hours thereafter. Thus the day of the *Amávasyá*, with the Sun and the Moon in *Makara Ráshi* and Jupiter fully aspecting that *Ráshi* from *Brisha Ráshi*, dawned in *Shravana Nakshatra*. This is considered to be a very rare event. It is said that the last time that it happened was in 1846, i.e. 108 years ago.

(6) Another important fact this year was that there was *Siddha Yóga* on the *Amávasyá*.

(7) It is, further, said that the *Kumbha Lagna* began on the morning of the *Amávasyá*, about 7 o'clock, and that this conferred considerable importance on the *Amavasya* bathing this year.

(8) Lastly, we have been informed that this year there was a solar eclipse on the *Amávasyá* day which, though not visible in India, was visible in the Pacific Ocean region.

It is the combination of so many astrological factors, influencing the religious side of the bathing festival, that made this year's *Kumbha*

so unique. The astrologers and the Pandits described it as Púrna Kumbha (perfect or complete Kumbha). Gradually the news that this year's Kumbha was of extraordinary significance spread and reached every corner of the country. Educated people learnt and appreciated some or all of the reasons given by the Pandits. Thus, by and by, a strong desire to attend this year's Kumbha was created in the hearts of a very large section of the Hindu population of the country. When the people heard that such a Kumbha would not occur again for another 108 years—and, possibly, not for another 144 years, according to one learned scholar—the desire became an irresistible urge. It must not be forgotten that in every human being, howsoever deeply immersed in worldly pursuits he might be, there is somewhere a lurking desire to do something which would enable him to gain spiritual advancement—howsoever vague his conception of it might be. The simpler and the less sophisticated the individual is, the stronger the desire. In fact, these are the people who are prepared to make sacrifices and to undergo great hardships in taking the required step. When they find that all that they need do is to undertake a journey to Prayága and bathe in the Sangam there on a certain day, the desire becomes all the stronger. One of the witnesses examined by the Committee, Sri Vishwanath Prasad Khare, has clearly explained the attitude of the people with regard to this year's Kumbha. He had given that explanation in his written statement and he repeated it when he appeared before the Committee for oral examination. The following passage, which I am quoting from his oral statement, puts the matter succinctly and clearly :

“The mentality of the people can be judged from this that they used to say with regard to their intention to attend this year's Kumbha : ‘Mar Jáyenge to tar jayenge aur bach jayenge to ghar jáyenge. Hamará to donon men fáyeda hai. Aise bhágya kah án jo aise punya kshetra men aisi ghari men marain. Dhanya unke bhágya jo marain. (If we are killed, we shall attain salvation. If we escape death, we shall go home. We shall be gainers in either case. Those who die at such a sacred spot, at such an auspicious moment, would be very lucky. We wish we had that good fortune).’ ”

The peculiarity about this year's Kumbha was that a substantial proportion of the educated section of the population was also moved by

this urge. The fact that such a Kumbha would not occur again for another 100 years, and more, must have played no small part in the creation of this atmosphere. The result was an unprecedented rush.

It must also be remembered that these fairs and bathing festivals have, from time immemorial, been an integral part of our culture. It was on such occasions that learned men assembled and held discussions of far-reaching importance. It was in such gatherings that the people got an opportunity of having the *darshan* of Rishis and sages, men of god-like character, whose mere *darshan* had an ennobling and elevating influence, and of getting the inestimable benefits of *satsanga* (association and intercourse with sages and learned men).

(c) *The site of the mela.*

It will be an advantage if a brief description of the locality in which the mela is held is given at this stage. It is necessary, however, first to give the outstanding features of the topography of the town of Allahabad. Map marked I will be useful in this connection. The town consists—as most towns came to do during the British regime—of the Cantonments and of what were called the ‘Civil Station’ and the ‘City’. The Cantonments comprised the area occupied by the Military Department, the ‘Civil Station’ was that part of the town in which the British officers in charge of the civil administration of the district resided and the ‘City’ was the part in which the Indian residents of the town lived. The whole of this area lies approximately in (latitude) 25°26′ North and (longitude) 81°50′ East. It occupies the eastern extremity of the Doab—land lying between two rivers, in this case the Ganga and the Yamuna—and is bounded on the north and the east by the Ganga and on the south by the Yamuna, the confluence occurring near the Fort. As I have already stated, the town occupies roughly the tract of land which in ancient times was designated Prayaga. The Emperor Akbar is said to have given to the town the name of Eláhábás (the abode of God). That, passing through certain stages, became Allahabad during the British regime.

The opinion has been expressed that Allahabad is a very straggling place and, for this reason, a topographical description is a matter of great difficulty. There are certain features, however, which can be pointed out without much difficulty. It will be noticed that there

are three cantonments, one shown as 'Fort Cantonment', another shown as 'Old Cantonment' and, lastly, the locality shown as 'New Cantonment' in map marked I.

It will, next, be noticed that the town is served by several railway systems, the oldest being the main line of what used to be known as the East Indian Railway (E. I. R.) running from Howrah (the terminus station for Calcutta) to Delhi. This line has to pass over the river Yamuna which is spanned by a magnificent bridge shown in map marked I as 'Jumna Bridge'. I have underlined the name in red ink. As it approaches the main station — shown in map marked I as 'Allahabad Jn' i. e. Allahabad Junction (underlined in red ink) — it divides the town into two parts, the City lying to the south, the Civil Station and the Old and the New Cantonments lying to the north and the Fort Cantonment lying to its east. From the main station (hereinafter referred to as the Junction Station) a line runs to the Fort and it is on this line that the mela special trains ran to the Sangam railway station. This station and the line are both shown in map marked II.

This main line of the East Indian Railway has now, for administrative purposes, been split up into two parts, the eastern portion from Howrah to Moghal Sarai becoming part of the system now known as the Eastern Railway (E. R.) and the western part from Moghal Sarai to Delhi being made over to the system now known as the Northern Railway (N. R.). Allahabad is situated on this latter section. This main line from Howrah to Delhi is about one hundred years old and its gauge is what is known as the broad gauge. Up to the end of the year 1924 it was owned by the East Indian Railway Company but the whole of the East Indian Railway was taken over by the State with effect from the 1st of January, 1925, under the terms of the contract between the State and the Company, the name East Indian being continued.

A little over fifty years ago another railway system, known as the Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway (O. R. R.), owned by the State, brought a number of lines to Allahabad from the north, establishing more direct communication between Allahabad and Lucknow, Faizabad and Jaunpur through Pratargarh, Rae Bareilly and Janghai situated on the main O. R. R. line. These lines converged on a village called Phaphamau, situated ~~to the~~ north of Allahabad,



just across the Ganga, where a station was built and was called Phaphamau Junction. The line was then carried over the river Ganga by means of a bridge called the Curzon Bridge and, passing through the ' Old Cantonment ' where a station called Prayaga (underlined in red ink in the map marked I) was built, went on to the Junction Station. This railway system too has got a line running into the mela area. It branches off from the main line at a point to the south of Prayaga Station and terminates at a station called Prayaga Ghat. It is situated to the north of the metre gauge station called Daraganj, just across the Grand Trunk Road. With effect from the 1st of July, 1925, the Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway was merged with the East Indian Railway and the whole system came to be known as the East Indian Railway. Practically the whole of it has thus become part of the Northern Railway.

Yet another railway system was brought to Allahabad about the year 1910. The metre gauge railway, known as the Bengal and North-Western Railway (B. N. W. R.), was extended from Banaras and approached Allahabad *via* Jhusi, situated on its east just across the river Ganga. A station was established there and another bridge was constructed over the river Ganga in order to bring the line on to Allahabad and a station was constructed in the quarter known as Daraganj, lying on the west bank of the river, and it was thence taken over to the terminus of that line which was called Allahabad City. The station situated in Daraganj was at first called Izat Bridge and is shown as such in the map marked I, but is now known as Daraganj. This station as well as the terminus, Allahabad City, have also been underlined in red ink in the map marked I. In 1943 the B. N. W. R., together with the system known as the Rohilkhand Kumaun Railway (R. K. R.), was also taken over by the Government and the entire system was given the name of Oudh Tirhut Railway (O. T. R.). The whole of it has now become part of the administrative unit known as the North-Eastern Railway.

Allahabad is further served by a fourth railway system which, passing through Jubbulpore and other stations in Madhya Pradesh, connects this town with Bombay. This line joins the Howrah-Delhi line at Naini Junction which lies to the south of the river Yamuna beyond the Jumna Bridge. It was originally owned by the Great Indian Peninsular Railway Company (G. I. P. R.), but the State

became its owner in 1925. It has now become part of the system known as the Central Railway.

In the matter of roads too Allahabad is fairly well served, though there is room for improvement. Apart from the Grand Trunk Road, which needs no description, there is the road to Faizabad *via* Pratapgarh and Sultanpur. Near Pratapgarh this road is intersected by the road from Banaras leading on to Lucknow and other places to the north-west. Then there is the road from Allahabad to Jaunpur, going on thereafter to Azamgarh in the north-east. Lastly, there is the newly constructed road to Mirzapur which goes on to Moghal Sarai near Banaras and thus provides an alternative motor route from Allahabad to Banaras. The road from Rewa joins this road near Mirzapur. There is, further, a direct road from Allahabad to Rewa. It branches off due south immediately after the southern end of the Jumna Bridge. There are a few other roads which need not be mentioned.

It will thus be seen that during the last fifty years or so means of communication have considerably increased and so, on occasions like the Kumbha Mela, a large number of pilgrims can easily come to Allahabad, not only by rail but also by road.

I should like to say a few words here about the possibilities of air travel. Allahabad has a magnificent aerodrome at Bamrauli which is situated at a distance of a few miles to the west of the New Cantonment. To the best of my knowledge, a great deal of money has been spent over this airport during the last 25 years or so and it is capable of dealing with all types of aircraft. If anything more is required to make it thoroughly up to date, that can easily be supplied. Unfortunately no passenger plane now comes to Bamrauli — except, of course, those foreign liners which, on their through flight to or from Dum Dum, have to make a landing at Bamrauli — generally during the night — on being instructed over the wireless that the weather at their port of destination is bad and that they must stop at Bamrauli until further instructions. There was a time when the Calcutta-Delhi Service used to pass through Bamrauli, but that was discontinued some years ago. I shall content myself by saying that it is a great pity and that, in my opinion, the reasons given for the discontinuance of the service are not valid. The Bharat Airways was also a commercial and profit-making concern and, as long as this line was in its charge, the daily passenger service used to

pass through Bamrauli. One can only express the hope that, now that the entire enterprise of Air Services for the transport of passengers and freight has been nationalised and has been taken over by Government, the matter will be reconsidered. At the time of the last Kumbha Mela the Calcutta-Patna-Banaras-Lucknow-Delhi plane passed through Bamrauli also and, judging from what I have heard, the enterprise was not a failure. Upon the conclusion of the mela, however, the plane ceased to touch Bamrauli.

As a look at the map marked I will show, the river Ganga approaches Allahabad from the north-west and the river Yamuna from the south-west. The Ganga begins to take a more northerly course after touching the New Cantonment. Thereafter she takes a bold sweep to the north-east as far as Phaphamau and the Curzon Bridge and then plunges southward as if she is anxious to meet the river Yamuna. The result is that, for some distance, before meeting the Yamuna, she runs from north to south. The Yamuna, on the other hand, approaches Allahabad from the south-west, flowing steadily between steep banks, in a channel which is more constant than that of the Ganga, until she joins the latter in the vicinity of the Fort.

The map marked I, being a guide map for the town of Allahabad for the convenience of motorists, does not fully show the rivers near the Sangam. Besides, it was printed in the year 1936 and so cannot show the position of the Ganga as it was at the time of the last Kumbha. Another map, appended hereto and marked II, clearly shows all that part of the locality, officially declared to be the mela area, which is material for our purpose, the two rivers, the Sangam and the part of "Kumbha Nagar" — as the temporary township which came into existence on the occasion of the last mela was called — which lay to the east of the Ganga. This map is an exact copy of 'The Lay-Out Plan for Kumbha Mela 1954, prepared by the Town and Village Planning Department, Uttar Pradesh Government'. The original Lay-Out Plan, prepared by the Town and Village Planning Department, is on thick blue paper. So, it would have been difficult to enclose it with this report. A local draftsman was, therefore, directed to make an exact copy on tracing cloth as this could be easily folded and appended to the report. It shows all the essential features of the locality in which the mela is held, and all the places with which the report is concerned are shown in this map.

The river Ganga — at any rate, during her passage through the district of Allahabad — frequently changes her course. According to the Gazetteer, she flows in a wide bed within the limits of which she is continually shifting her channel and her course is a succession of large bends, which characteristic she maintains throughout. The Yamuna, on the other hand, as has already been stated, has a more constant channel, and the changes in its course are of little importance.

The changes in the course of the Ganga raise every now and then very serious problems for those who are in charge of the planning and the administration of the mela.

As has already been indicated, there is a Fort in the locality in which the mela is held and the union of the rivers takes place in the vicinity of this Fort. The site of the confluence keeps shifting. It depends on the position of the channel of the Ganga. The Fort was constructed sometime in the last quarter of the sixteenth century under the orders of Emperor Akbar. The engineers found it necessary to erect an embankment, called a Bandh, extending for several miles from the north-east corner of the Fort in a northerly and north-westerly direction until it reaches that part of the Old Cantonment where Prayāga Railway Station now stands. It is shown in the map marked II as Bund Road. The object of this embankment obviously was to prevent the Ganga from inundating the low-lying area between what may be roughly described as the 'Civil Station' and the river. The map marked I shows the situation of the Government House, the Darbhanga Castle and Colonelganj. They are all on high land, but immediately to their east the land slopes steeply right down to the bank of the river.

During the rains the Ganga is one vast sheet of water, the width in certain places at times being as much as two or three miles, but in the winter and hot weather it shrinks to comparatively small dimensions. It is only when the rainy season is over that one can have an idea as to where the channel of the river is going to be. Even during the winter months she keeps cutting away either her western or her eastern bank. In the latter case, the river goes on receding to the east and so leaves a wide area between her western bank and the Bund and the whole mela can in that case be accommodated in that area. The crucial importance of the area — particularly the

width — of the land between the Ganga and the Bund lies in the fact that all those who wish to bathe in the Sangam, at *Prayāga*, from whichever direction they may be coming, have to pass along some portion of this land in order to reach the Sangam. At the time of the last Kumbha the area of this land was very small, being only about 80 acres, and the width at the narrowest part was only about 160 feet. Thus, the two most important features of the locality are the position of the channel of the Ganga — which keeps shifting — and the Bund.

It will also be noticed that there was this year a vast sandy stretch on the east of the Ganga and that all the camps of those pilgrims who stayed in the mela area for the duration of the mela — Akharas of the Sadhus, the Kalpabasis, etc. etc. — besides shops, certain offices etc., were located there. Another feature of the locality to which attention may be called is this. The vast bulk of the crowd coming to bathe in the Sangam has to pass through the land lying immediately to the west of the Bund and has to go across the Bund, approaching it by such route or routes as may be available to it. The importance of this land is, therefore, obvious. It may, further, be pointed out that the Bund and the entire land lying to its west and bounded on the north by the Grand Trunk Road, on the south by the Yamuna and stretching on the west up to the Minto Park and the Cemetery Road, belong to the Military Department, being part of the Fort Contonment, as will appear from the map marked I. The open land to the west of the Bund is known as the Parade. Another direction, from which pilgrims coming from certain parts of the town of Allahabad could come, is the north from Daraganj side, but the number of people coming from this direction is comparatively small. A fair proportion of the crowd of bathers also approaches the Sangam by boats, from the west down the Yamuna, from the south across the Yamuna and from the east across the Ganga.

(d) *The Akharas.*

There are two other matters which should be mentioned in this chapter for they are important ingredients in the general background. The first is the participation in the Kumbha Melas of what are called Akharas of Sadhus. A number of Akharas and other organisations of Sadhus as well as many miscellaneous Sadhus come to the mela, but eight of the Akharas have, for many years past, been recognised by

the authorities to have certain special privileges in the matter of going to the Sangam to bathe on the three important days of the mela — the Makara Sankranti, the Amavasya and the Vasanta Panchami.

They are :—

- (1) Mahanirvani (Sanyasi) Akhara
- (2) Niranjani-cum-Juná (Sanyasi) Akharas
- (3) Nirváni (Vairagi) Akhara
- (4) Digámbær (Vairagi) Akhara
- (5) Nirmohi (Vairagi) Akhara
- (6) Chhota Pancháyati (Udasi) Akhara
- (7) Bará Pancháyati (Udasi) Akhara
- (8) Nirmalá-cum-Vrindávani Akharas. (According to the Gazetteer of Allahabad, the Nirmalas are “still Sikhs in principle” and the Vrindavanis are “Nanak Shahis”).

These Akharas claim, and have been granted, the right to go to the Sangam on the three important bathing days aforesaid in a procession with as much pomp and show and paraphernalia as they can manage to have — richly caparisoned elephants, horses, camels, Sadhus brandishing various weapons as if they were soldiers going to attack, or to meet the attack of, an enemy, big drums, trumpets, bands, *et hoc genus omne*. A substantial proportion of the assembled pilgrims, specially those from the villages, like to watch the processions as tamasha. There are also those among them, mostly old men and women — possibly more women than men — who watch these processions because they believe that they would thus be able to get the *darshan* of mahatmas. Many of them, further, want, if possible, to touch the feet of some Sadhu or other or to take the dust from the ground which the Sadhus have trodden. I shall deal with the history and the organisation of these Akharas at a later stage. What I want to point out at present is this that some of them are troublesome and turbulent and have always caused great anxiety to the mela authorities lest they should create a riot. It may be mentioned that the Vairagis are said to be the foremost among the trouble-makers. Sri J. N. Ugra, the District Magistrate of Allahabad, when asked whether the Sadhus are a class of people with whom it is very difficult to deal, stated as follows :—

“Yes, they are a class of people with whom it is extremely difficult to deal. It is not easy to make them agree to what, in a given set of circumstances, appears reasonable to every

body else. They are orthodox and obstinately cling to tradition. They are very jealous of what they consider to be their rights."

Similarly, Sri J. P. Tripathi, the Senior Superintendent of Police of the Mela area, has said :—

"They are extremely jealous of their traditions and any deviation from those traditions is violently opposed by them."

The result is that the mela authorities have always been extremely anxious to placate these Sadhus. The desire to keep them satisfied has always been almost an obsession with the officials. A sentence from the Report sent, in the usual course, to the Commissioner, Allahabad Division, by the then District Magistrate, Mr. H. V. (subsequently Sir Verney) Lovett, I.C.S., on the conclusion of the 1906 Kumbha Mela, may be quoted in this connection. A tragedy had occurred in that mela also. It happened in the bathing area just near the place where the people were entering the waters of the Sangam for bathing. After stating that Mr. Sherring, Joint Magistrate and Officer-in-Charge of the mela, on noticing that the pressure of the crowd at that place was tremendous, "went off to the nearest gate of the Fort to obtain the aid of troops" and that "this was promptly furnished, and cavalry was requisitioned from cantonments", Mr. Lovett goes on to say : "but before the position could be adequately strengthened, a catastrophe had occurred. One or two unfortunates had come down in the press at the bottom of the slope, and over their prostrate bodies others too had fallen. The lower end of the barrier had burst, and the crowd had naturally streamed on down the slope and added to the calamity". He then gives reasons for the occurrence and describes the steps taken to guard against further mishaps. After emphasising "the priceless value of mounted men on such occasions", he goes on to say : "It may be asked : why was not all this foreseen, and aid from the military procured beforehand ?" He gives several reasons for the lack of foresight and the failure to take suitable steps beforehand and states one of those reasons in these words: "Perhaps unconsciously our minds were over-concentrated on the processions and the prevention of riots among the Bairagi sects." The officials in charge of the mela arrangements since the attainment of independence have inherited that 'over-concentration'. It is, further, highly probable that, in addition to the fact that the present-day officials have inherited the frame of mind just mentioned from their predecessors of the British

period, they have also the feeling that they must be careful lest the Sadhus should enlist the sympathy of some political, or politico-religious, organization or other, and bring about an agitation which might get them into trouble. The officials in the British period could be, and were, very firm with the Sadhus whenever they thought that the occasion demanded it. The present-day officials, apparently, are inclined to be more circumspect and to take the line of least resistance.

(e) *The Sangam Railway Station.*

The other matter is the situation of, and the extent of the area occupied by, the Northern Railway Sangam Station at the time of the 1954 Kumbha. A look at the map marked II will make the position clear. In the first place, the railway authorities thought fit to locate the station in such close proximity to the Bandh that very little space was left between the eastern boundary of the station enclosure and the western end of the slope of the Bandh. In the second place, they took possession of a substantial portion of the open space available in the Parade area. The railway authorities had made their decision at an early stage with the result that, when the mela officials started work, they were faced with what has been described as a settled fact.

Sri K. N. Misra, the Town and Village-Planner to the Uttar Pradesh Government, who was deputed to prepare a plan for the 1954 Kumbha Mela, has stated as follows : " When I arrived here on the 10th or the 11th of November, 1953, I was faced with a number of accomplished facts, among them being the location of the Sangam Railway Station and the extent of the land which was to be occupied by it....."

Sri S. K. Anand, the then Senior Superintendent of Police, Allahabad, had issued, some time before the last Kumbha Mela began, a booklet entitled " Allahabad Kumbha Mela January 14 to March 3, 1954, Orders for the District Police". It is Ex. 64 on our record. In paragraph 5 of the first chapter of this booklet, at page 2, he has observed as follows : " The establishment of Sangam Railway Station in the Parade area above the Bandh has created big problems for everybody."

Similarly, Sri J. P. Tripathi, the Senior Superintendent of Police in charge of the Kumbha Mela, 1954, had issued a booklet called " General Police Orders, Allahabad Kumbha Mela, 1954 ". It is Ex. 49 on our record. Sri Tripathi also referred to this matter of the location



of the Sangam Railway Station in that booklet. In sub-paragraph (c) of the first paragraph of Part I, he says : "On account of establishment of Sangam Railway Station in the Parade area, above the Bandh, and on account of establishment of military stores in the Fort area very little space will be available for pilgrims, Kalpabasis, Pragwals, Akharas and shops there", and, lower down in sub-paragraph (d), he states : "The establishment of Sangam Railway Station in the Parade area above the Bandh has created big problems for everybody".

Another quotation, this time from the columns of the '*Leader*', may be given. In its issue, bearing date November 20, 1953, and marked 'Morning Edition', a report of a meeting of the Mela Committee, held on the evening of the 18th November, 1953, is printed at page 2 under the heading : "Allahabad Kumbh Mela Arrangements, Limited Space This Year". Among other things, it is stated in this report that "the opinion expressed at the meeting was unanimous that the situation caused by the vagaries of the river, resulting in very limited space being available on this side of the river, was aggravated by the decision of the railway to plan and expand the Sangam Station, which narrowed down the mela area above the Bandh too".

Mahant Sri Kishore Das Ji, the head of the Panchayati Bara Akhara, in mentioning the circumstances which, in his opinion, led to this tragedy stated, among other things, as follows :—

"1 (a) The fact that the Sangam Railway Station occupied so much space and extended up to the Bandh, the result of which was that the public had no space in which it could spread itself.

(b) The fact that a very large number of trains were to come into the Sangam Railway Station (because of which the level crossing gates could not be kept open for any appreciable length of time), led the authorities to construct overbridges, in consequence of which the major portion of the crowd was forced to come on to the Triveni Road, instead of being able to spread itself in various directions.

(c) As the Sangam Railway Station was constructed and trains were brought up to it, the pilgrims arriving by those trains converged on to the Bandh immediately. If no such station had been constructed and all the pilgrims had alighted at the Allahabad Junction Station, the crowd would have spread itself on numerous roads in the town and would have approached

the mela area from various routes. The density of the crowd on Ramp no. 1 would then not have been so great ”.

In a subsequent portion of his deposition he stated as follows :—

“ .....the officials succeeded in persuading the Fort authorities to vacate only a small portion of the Parade area and that also after the Sankranti day. If large portions of the Parade area maidan had not been kept in their possession by the Fort authorities and occupied by the Sangam Railway Station, ample open space would have been available to the public and that would have been conducive to their convenience and safety. The attention of the mela officials had been drawn to these matters before the arrangements for the mela were taken in hand. But, the Fort and the railway being under the Central Government, the mela officials did not succeed in their efforts. As a matter of fact, the railway had planned the extension of the Sangam Station.....at such an early stage that the mela officials could do nothing ”.

Being a non-official, Mahant Sri Kishore Das Ji was able to speak freely.

It is against the background outlined above that one has to view everything connected with this Kumbha.

### III—THE PREPARATIONS FOR, AND THE ORGANIZATION OF, THE MELA.

What strikes one at the very outset is the fact that the preparations for the mela were started rather late. As is evident from the statement of Sri Jaikaran Nath Ugra, the District Magistrate, practically nothing was done up to some time in the first week of September, 1953. This is late even for an ordinary Kumbha Mela, to say nothing of a Kumbha of the type of the 1954 Kumbha. There appear to have been several causes for this. It need hardly be said that it is the duty of the District Magistrate of Allahabad to set the ball rolling by informing Government of his requirements in connection with the forthcoming mela, and the first thing that he has to do is to send up the mela budget at the proper time. Sri H. C. Gupta, I.C.S., who was the District Magistrate of Allahabad before Sri J. N. Ugra, submitted the budget fairly well in time. It appears that, under the

rules embodied in the United Provinces Budget Manual (Third Edition), the budget estimates for the 1954 Kumbha should have reached the office of the Accountant General, Uttar Pradesh, by the 10th of October, 1952, in order that the mela budget might be included in the Uttar Pradesh Government budget for the year 1953-54. As the budget did not reach the Accountant-General's office by that date, a reminder was issued. The delay seems to have been caused by the fact that several departments are concerned with the preparation of the mela budget—for example, the Local Self-Government, the Police, the Public Works, etc.—and there was some delay in the receipt of those sections of the budget with which some of these departments were concerned, although Sri H. C. Gupta had been writing to them since July, 1952. The consolidated budget was, however, forwarded by Sri H. C. Gupta to the Commissioner on the 6th November, 1952. It may be mentioned here that the total estimated expenditure shown in the budget was about two and a half times the expenditure incurred in the Ardha Kumbha of 1947-48. The reasons given by Sri H. C. Gupta for the increase were as follows:—

“The increase in the figures of 1953-54 is in almost all cases due to the abnormal rise in the cost of material and labour, emoluments and dearness allowance”. The significance of these reasons given by Sri H. C. Gupta lies in the fact that they do not show any awareness on the part of Sri H. C. Gupta that the 1954 Kumbha was expected to be a bigger affair than any of the previous Kumbhs. Similarly, there were increases in the budgets of the Police and the Local Self-Government Engineering Departments and reasons for those increases were given by the Senior Superintendent of Police and the Executive Engineer, but there is nothing in those reasons to show that they had any knowledge of the fact that the 1954 Kumbha was likely to attract a much bigger crowd than had ever assembled in any previous Kumbha Mela. Then, again, the District Magistrate, Sri H. C. Gupta, sent a letter on the 31st March, 1953, to the Chief Secretary to Government requesting that “an experienced I.C.S. or I.A.S. officer be posted to this district as Officer-in-Charge Magh Mela in good time.....”, and he gave his reasons for the request in these words:—“During the Kumbha of 1942, Sri V. H. Ruse, I.C.S., was the Officer-in-Charge and Sri K. C. Shukla, I.A.S., was in-charge of Ardha Kumbh in 1948. The forthcoming Kumbh is likely to be of the same magnitude, if not larger”. Thereupon, the Assistant

Secretary in the relevant department wrote to the Commissioner of Allahabad Division on the 24th April, 1953, and requested him to send his proposals for appointment of an Officer-in-Charge, "having regard to the fact that the attendance will be larger than in the previous years owing to the occurrence of a Kumbh." It is, thus, clear that, up to the end of April, 1953, neither the local officials nor the Government were aware that the Kumbha of 1954 was a Kumbha of special significance.

The next important event was that Sri H. C. Gupta, the District Magistrate, after holding the first meeting of the Mela Advisory Committee on the 21st May, 1953, proceeded on leave for one month and five days with effect from the 24th of May, 1953, making over charge to the then Additional District Magistrate, Sri B. D. Seth. It seems to me that the facts that Sri H. C. Gupta thought fit to proceed on leave at that time and that Government sanctioned the leave also indicate that neither Sri Gupta nor the Government knew that the 1954 Kumbha was likely to be attended by a much larger number of pilgrims than in previous Kumbhs.

While Sri H. C. Gupta, who had been District Magistrate at Allahabad for some time past, was still on leave, he received orders that his services had been placed at the disposal of the Government of India, Ministry of Irrigation and Power, with effect from the forenoon of 8th June, 1953. He, therefore, proceeded to New Delhi and Sri B. D. Seth continued to officiate as District Magistrate of Allahabad. Subsequently, Sri J. N. Ugra, I.A.S., who was at that time posted at Faizabad as Deputy Commissioner, was transferred to Allahabad as District Magistrate and he took over charge on the 14th of July, 1953. He has stated before us that, after his arrival here, he remained extremely busy for some time in studying the details of the district administration and that it was only some time in the first week of September that he was able to devote serious attention to the work of the forthcoming Kumbha Mela. It was during this period that Allahabad had the misfortune, in the third and fourth weeks of August, to be visited by a terrific deluge when about 27 inches of rain fell in the course of five days and the level of the Ganga almost reached danger point. Sri Ugra says that he had heard before leaving Faizabad that the 1954 Kumbha was likely to be a special Kumbha. He has, further, stated that he heard the same thing on his arrival at Allahabad also. He

might have heard it, but it seems to me that the fact had not up to that time become known to the general public. The newspapers do not appear to have said anything on the subject. I have had the old files of the '*Leader*' examined and the only sign of any interest being taken in the Kumbha fair that has been discovered up to the month of September is a small news item, appearing in the '*Leader*' dated the 4th September, 1953, saying that Sri A. S. Baghel had been appointed Officer-in-Charge. It is quite clear that the news that, according to astrologers and Pandits, the 1954 Kumbha would be one of special significance had not yet filtered down to the people. In all likelihood, many of those who are astrologers by profession themselves did not know it. I have enquired from some astrologers whom I know and they have told me that it was only a few weeks before Makara Sankranti that they heard that the 1954 Kumbha would be one of peculiar sanctity and that thereupon they consulted their books and found that the news was correct.

Sri Ugra appears to have realised soon after he turned his attention to the mela work that an Officer-in-Charge was urgently needed and he drew the attention of Government to the necessity of the appointment of an Officer-in-Charge without delay. The result was that Sri A. S. Baghel arrived and took over charge on the 22nd September, 1953. This, as I have already said, was rather late. Sri Baghel himself states : "Shortly after taking over charge here I did feel that it would have been advantageous if it had been possible for me to have arrived here two or three months earlier. This was because of the magnitude of the work that faced us". In spite of this he had to absent himself from Allahabad for a few days because he had to go back to Meerut to deliver judgment on the 30th of September in some case which he had tried. Sri Baghel goes on to add : "The difficulty, however, was solved by the appointment of an Additional Officer-in-Charge shortly after my arrival. He did a good deal of the work which would, otherwise, have devolved on me alone". It seems to me, however, that this appointment of an Additional Officer-in-Charge could not, and did not, really solve the difficulty. In the first place, the Additional Officer-in-Charge, Sri Babu Ram Gupta, who is a Deputy Collector, did not arrive until the 9th of November, 1953. Secondly, he does not appear to have really worked as an Additional Officer-in-Charge— as an officer who could take the place, of the Officer-in-Charge, shoulder the entire responsibility and act on

his own initiative—but merely as a sort of an assistant who carried out the orders of Sri Baghel. The latter himself states that, even when he fell ill in January, 1954 and had to go to hospital, he used to issue orders over a mobile wireless set fitted to a vehicle stationed near his room in the ward of the hospital. The importance of the position of the Officer-in-Charge will be apparent from the following statement of Sri Babu Ram Gupta : “The Officer-in-Charge of the mela is the officer on whom falls the responsibility of managing the entire mela under the supervision of the District Magistrate. It is for him to coordinate the activities of the various other departments functioning in the mela. The Officer-in-Charge is responsible for planning the mela..... The Officer-in-Charge is the officer who is really responsible for the entire administration and management of the mela”. Sri B. R. Gupta never filled this role. The fact of the matter seems to be that Sri J. N. Ugra, the District Magistrate, took upon himself the entire burden of the mela. It may also be stated here that the reason for the appointment of an Additional Officer-in-Charge for the 1954 Kumbha, as given by Sri B. R. Gupta, was not to solve the difficulty created by the delay in the arrival of Sri A. S. Baghel as stated by the latter, but something else. This is what Sri B. R. Gupta states : “In previous years no Additional Officer-in-Charge was appointed even on the occasions of Kumbha and Ardha Kumbha. The reason why it was considered necessary to appoint an Additional Officer-in-Charge for the 1954 Kumbha was that it was expected to be a much bigger affair than even the previous Kumbha”.

It seems to me quite clear that it was only when Sri J. N. Ugra was able to turn his attention to the mela work in the first week of September, 1953 and realised the urgency of the situation that Government were made aware of the true position. I may say here that, in my opinion, it is no exaggeration to say that it was the personality, the driving power and the devotion to duty of Sri Ugra that, in the face of heavy odds, brought into being the splendid organization that the 1954 Kumbha was.

It is also quite clear that the Government of Uttar Pradesh, as soon as they were apprised of the real state of affairs, rose to the occasion splendidly. The result was that the mela was planned and organized on a grand scale. The mela area was treated as a separate district and the staff sanctioned for its administration was on a generous scale. Its strength—at any rate so far as officers were concerned—

was, I think, the same as that of the staff which is ordinarily deputed to one of the larger districts. The District Magistrate of Allahabad was the District Magistrate of this district also, but all the other officers—magisterial and police—were separate. The Officer-in-Charge had the powers of an Additional District Magistrate and there were below him seven Area Magistrates in charge of seven sectors or areas. Then there was an officer of the Tahsildar grade who was the Manager of the mela and there were under him eight Naib-Tahsildars working as Assistant Managers in charge of different areas. There were a Senior Superintendent of Police, a Superintendent of Police and 10 gazetted officers (Assistant Superintendents and Deputy Superintendents), besides an Assistant Commandant of the Provincial Armed Constabulary. Next came 98 non-gazetted officers (Circle Inspectors, Reserve Inspectors, Company Commanders, Sub-Inspectors, Platoon Commanders, Risaldars, etc.). There were eight Police Stations, three of which were Kotwalis, and there were 27 Police Outposts. There was a Fire Station attached to each of the Police Stations. There were three Police lines. The total strength of the police force deputed to the mela was 2,882. This was made up of 13 gazetted officers, 119 non-gazetted officers and 2,750 other ranks. It included 114 members of the mounted police, consisting of 2 Risaldars, 16 Dafadars and 96 Sowars. There were, besides, 250 chowkidars. Further, there was a police force, the strength of which was about 550, deputed to the Cholera inoculation barriers. When the order requiring inoculation had been cancelled, this police force was not made available to the mela authorities but was deputed elsewhere.

Coming to the medical side, there can be no doubt that the arrangements were on a lavish scale. According to a speech broadcast by Dr. V. P. Gupta, Assistant Director of Medical and Health Services, II Range, and Officer-in-charge, Kumbha Mela Medical and Health Organisation, from the All-India Radio on the 25th December, 1953, there were eight hospitals, big and small. Of these, two were exclusively for Infectious Diseases, two were combined General and Infectious Diseases hospitals and the remaining four were for general diseases. There were four Ayurvedic Aushadhalayas also. There were, besides, eight First-Aid Posts. Midwifery service and free diet to poor patients were also, according to him, to be provided. There

were 17 Medical Officers, 3 Lady Doctors, 20 Nurses and the necessary number of Ward Boys, Cooks, Kahars and Stretcher Bearers.

For the sanitary arrangements, there were, according to Dr. Gupta, 40 Medical Officers of Health, 9 Chief Sanitary Inspectors, 33 Sanitary Inspectors, 926 Provincial Armed Constabulary men and several Sanitary Jamadars and Beldars who were supplied with sufficient quantities of medicines and disinfectants. There were over 6,000 sweepers. According to him, Government had sanctioned over rupees 17 lakhs for Medical and Public Health arrangements in the Kumbha Mela.

Dr. V. P. Gupta was the head of the entire organisation and Dr. M. N. Agarwal was his second in command.

Elaborate arrangements for the supply of wholesome drinking water were made. A large number of latrines and urinals were constructed in all parts of the mela area. The entire mela area was well lighted by electricity.

Another very important step that was taken to safeguard the interests not only of the pilgrims but of the whole country was that, under the powers conferred upon them by law, the U. P. Government issued a notification enjoining that, from the 7th January to the 8th February, 1954, no one should enter Allahabad and its suburbs, up to a distance of ten miles from Allahabad, unless he was inoculated against Cholera on a date not prior to 1st November, 1953. Passengers had to produce a certificate signed by one of the persons whose qualifications were specified in the notification or had to get themselves inoculated at one of the eight inoculation barriers that had been set up.

The result of the elaborate medical and sanitary arrangements and of the introduction of compulsory inoculation was that, probably for the first time in the history of the Kumbha fair, there was no outbreak of Cholera or any other epidemic. Even the severest critics of the mela arrangements have spoken in glowing terms of the excellence of the sanitary arrangements. It has been said that not a single fly or mosquito was seen in Kumbha Nagar throughout the duration of the mela. This was no mean achievement, particularly in view of the habits of a large section of the pilgrims who had come to the mela, notable among them being those who had arrived during the night between the 2nd and the 3rd February and had bivouacked in the open air, and certain groups of Sadhus.



It will be convenient to give here the boundaries of the mela area, as published in the *U. P. Government Gazette*. They were as follows :—

*North*—"From junction of Jawaharlal Nehru Road and the Grand Trunk Road, along the Grand Trunk Road up to the Pontoon Bridge, thence along the Pontoon Bridge, over the Ganga up to the Eastern ends of approach roads and thence in a straight line to culvert no. 95 on the North-Eastern Railway line."

*East*—"From North-Eastern Railway Culvert no. 95, along District Board Kachcha Road, leading to old Jhusi, up to the point, where it enters the *abadi*, thence along the north-western boundary of the *abadi* of village Jhusi and Havalia, thence along the Lotun Nala, up to the point where it enters the bed of the Ganga and thence along the high banks of the Ganga up to half a mile beyond the most easterly point of the Sangam and thence across the river to the right bank."

*South*—"From half a mile below the most easterly point of Sangam on the right bank along the line, drawn up to the south-easterly edge of the *abadi* of village Arail, thence along the southern boundary of the village and that of the village Chak-Darvesh, thence along the western boundary of the *abadi* of Chak-Arasi Khan Alam up to a point 500 feet above the right bank of Jamuna directly opposite to the south-eastern corner of the Fort and thence along a straight line drawn from this point to where the bank of Jamuna meets the Northern Railway Bridge."

*West*—"From the point where the right bank of the river Jamuna meets Northern Railway bridge to its other end, thence along the Jamuna Bank Road turning along the road crossing near Naini House which goes straight to Grand Trunk Road, thence along the Grand Trunk Road up to junction with Jawaharlal Nehru Road."

For facility of reference, I have marked such of the boundary lines as can be shown in the map marked II. It is not possible to indicate on this map the eastern and the southern boundaries because they were in localities which are not shown in this map. It will be sufficient to say that the eastern boundary was in village Jhusi and the southern boundary ran to the south of village Arail up to the southern end of the Northern Railway Jamuna Bridge. The whole of the western boundary also cannot be shown on the map

because it ran along the Jamuna Bridge and thence along that portion of the Yamuna Bank Road which is not shown in the map.

A Central Control Room was established in a tent in the Parade area. It was located quite close to the Bandh and faced the Triveni Road. It is shown in map marked II as "Control Offices" but it was known as the Central Control Room and has been referred to by that name by every one who has appeared before the Committee. The letters "D. M." in the space immediately to the east of the "Control Offices" mean "District Magistrate". The Control Room was connected with all important places in the mela area by wireless as well as by telephone and had two extremely useful large-scale maps. One was an illuminated map fixed to a wooden frame shaped like an easel and the other was on the ground. The latter was a military map which is technically known as "Sand Model" and is a relief map, made to scale, showing all the important details. Thus, the officers on duty in the Central Control Room had the entire mela area before them and could understand all the messages received and could immediately issue suitable orders.

A number of watch towers were constructed in various parts of the mela area. Of these, one was situated near the Sangam, another immediately to the north of the junction of the Bund Road and Ramp no. 1, a third immediately to the north of the junction of Bund Road and Ramp no. 2 and a fourth in the Kotwali located on the Kali Sarak. There were several watch towers in the Jhusi area (i.e. the portion of Kumbha Nagar situated in the sandy stretch to the east of the Ganga) and there was one in Arail. The watch towers were equipped with a wireless set, a telephone, a siren, binoculars and a fire indicator. The wireless set was a combined receiving and transmitting set. On ordinary days the staff in each watch tower consisted of one head constable and three constables of the Provincial Armed Constabulary, besides the wireless operator. On peak days a Sub-Inspector was also placed on duty on these watch towers. The peak days were as follows :

- |                             |                    |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| (1) Sankranti .. ..         | January 14, 1954.  |
| (2) Paush Purnimá .. ..     | January 19, 1954.  |
| (3) Amávasya (Kumbha) .. .. | February 3, 1954.  |
| (4) Vasanta Panchami .. ..  | February 8, 1954.  |
| (5) Mágha Purnimá .. ..     | February 17, 1954. |
| (6) Shiva Rátri .. ..       | March 3, 1954.     |

Sri Jamuna Prasad Tripathi, I.P., took over charge of the office of Senior Superintendent of Police of the Kumbha Mela on the 9th November, 1953. Before that he was in the Criminal Investigation Department with headquarters at Lucknow. He says that, even before the 9th November, 1953, while he was still in the C.I.D. at Lucknow, he was ordered to come to Allahabad every now and then in order to help in the planning of the mela and that he used to do so. He came for the first time in the last week of September and came several times thereafter. In spite of the shortness of the time at his disposal, Sri Tripathi prepared the booklet entitled "General Police Orders, Allahabad Kumbha Mela, 1954", which I have already mentioned. It is, as already stated, Ex. 49 on our record and copy thereof is sent herewith. Sri Tripathi not only wrote it out and obtained the orders of the District Magistrate and the Deputy Inspector General of Police, Southern Range, thereon, but also had it printed by the Government Press at Allahabad by the middle of December. It is an excellent pamphlet and it seems to me that, if all the subordinates of Sri Tripathi had carefully followed the instructions contained in it and had worked in the spirit that pervades it, the public would have been more appreciative of the work of the police in the mela than they appear to have been. A few quotations will illustrate my meaning :—

"On account of independence every citizens of our country expects his due from the Police and, to keep up the name of the U. P. Police, it is essential that every Police Officer and man should take a vow from the very start that he will perform his duties loyally and faithfully and will leave no stone unturned in helping and assisting the public during the mela. Honesty, hard work and politeness should be our watch-words and we should never lose patience while facing a difficult situation."  
[Paragraph 1(h).]

"The constables posted at the Enquiry Offices *must* be polite in their behaviour to the persons who come to the Enquiry Offices for making enquiries.....The constables, if they have to give replies in English to the persons making enquiries, *must* address them in a polite tone and use the word 'Sir' as a token of respect. If the Enquiry Office constable is talking in Hindi, he will use the word 'Shriman' as a token of respect. In no case, the constables of the Enquiry

Office will be discourteous to the person making an enquiry from him, howsoever unreasonable the gentleman making the enquiry may be.....*It has to be borne in mind that much of the reputation of the Mela Police will depend on the efficient working of the Enquiry Offices and the polite and courteous behaviour of the constables attached to the Enquiry Offices.*" [Paragraph 7(a)].

Dealing with voluntary organisations, Sri Tripathi says :—

"The Police on duty will give full cooperation to all volunteer organisations that are deputed for duty in the mela area. They should bear it in mind that the members of volunteer organisations are unpaid social workers who have volunteered for rendering assistance and service to the public during the Kumbh Mela and they have to be treated as volunteers and not as paid employees. It will not be possible to expect the same rigidity of work from them as from paid servants of the Government. Every facility should be given by the Police to volunteers to help and render assistance to the public in the mela. In case of a difference of opinion, the matter will be referred to the Senior Superintendent of Police, incharge Kumbh Mela, **IMMEDIATELY** instead of allowing the trouble to brew up and explode." [Paragraph 45(b)].

Dealing with the problem of the regulation of pedestrian traffic, he says :—

"The Police deputed for pedestrian traffic will see that there are no jams and hold-ups of pedestrian traffic anywhere in the mela area. It should be remembered that the secret of success in controlling pedestrian traffic is that a continuous flow of pedestrian traffic should be allowed and all sorts of hold-ups and traffic jams avoided. Any obstruction, whether of a permanent or temporary nature, should NOT be allowed on the in-coming and out-going roads anywhere in the mela area". [Paragraph 44 (f)].

Further, after pointing out that the space available for the passing of the large crowds in the Sangam area between the Bandh and the river Ganga was limited and that there would be a continuous flow of pedestrian traffic from about 3 a.m. to 10 a.m. on the peak days,

both from the Triveni road and the pontoon bridges constructed over the Ganga, he says :—

“Great care will have to be taken to see that the continuous flow of pedestrian traffic is not stopped in any way by congestion and jams of pedestrian traffic.” [Paragraph 51 (a)].

This point is emphasised again at page 53 where it is said :—

“Certain roads have been set apart for use of pedestrian traffic only and no vehicular traffic will be allowed on these roads. Special precautions will have to be taken by Traffic Police to see that traffic jams are avoided.” (First paragraph of Appendix ‘H’).

It will thus be seen that Sri J. P. Tripathi laid down in this booklet all necessary directions, expressed in clear, precise and emphatic language. If some part or parts of the police machinery failed to function properly on certain occasions, no blame can be laid at Sri Tripathi's door, unless there is clear evidence to show that he was negligent in any manner. There is no such evidence before us. There is, further, no reliable evidence that any member of the public brought to Sri Tripathi's notice any instance of inefficiency or incivility on the part of the police and that he failed to take suitable action. I do not, for a moment, mean to say that there was not such inefficiency and incivility. On the contrary, I have every reason to believe that there was a good deal of both incompetence and rudeness on the part of various members of the police force, specially in the lower ranks. All that I am saying is that Sri J. P. Tripathi cannot be blamed for it. It must also not be forgotten that Sri Tripathi had no hand in the selection of either the officers or the men. The gazetted officers were nominated and deputed by the Inspector-General of Police and the non-gazetted officers and men were supplied by the Superintendents of Police of various districts under the orders of the respective Deputy Inspectors-General for each of whom the Inspector General had fixed the quota. Sri Tripathi has stated that, of the gazetted officers, he had known only Sri Agha Mohiuddin Shah and that, among the non-gazetted officers, he had known a few. It must also be borne in mind that the police force deputed to the mela was made available to Sri Tripathi by about the 25th of December, 1953, as stated by him, and the first important bathing day was on the 14th of January, 1954. Sri Tripathi could not possibly get fully acquainted

with all the officers and men who were to work under him within this short time. Further, the time available was much too short to give proper training to all the members of the police force in all aspects of their duties and to make them acquainted with all that they were likely to be called upon to do.

Nine Enquiry Offices were established in the mela area by the Police and each of them was manned by three Civil Police literate constables under the supervision of the Sub-Inspector in charge of the police station or outpost in the locality where the Enquiry Office was situated. The duties of the men in charge of these Enquiry Offices were laid down in paragraphs 6 and 7 of Ex. 49. I have already quoted some of the directions given in those paragraphs.

As stated above, there were eleven gazetted officers, besides Sri Tripathi and the Assistant Commandant of the Provincial Armed Constabulary. Separate duties were assigned to each of these gazetted officers. One of them was in charge of Traffic and his duties were clearly laid down in paragraph 28 of Ex. 49. I would specially invite attention to clauses (c), (g) and (j) of that paragraph. This officer was Sri R. B. Maelzer, Deputy Superintendent of Police. Prior to his deputation to the Kumbha Mela he held the post of Assistant Commandant, III Battalion, Provincial Armed Constabulary, at Lucknow. It is clear that he was one of the most important police officers in the mela. The following quotations from his statement before us are pertinent :—

“The main responsibility for the failure of any arrangements for the safety of the pilgrims on the morning of the 3rd February, 1954, or any other day must fall on my shoulder.”

Q.—Is it not a fact that, you being the gazetted officer in charge of Traffic, pedestrian as well as vehicular, responsibility for the failure to provide for all contingencies in the regulation of traffic in order to prevent accidents and injuries to the people coming to bathe, must fall on you ?

A.—Yes, the responsibility does rest on me.

Lower down, he gives an explanation as to why the arrangements of which he was in charge cannot be held responsible for the particular tragedy with which we are concerned. I shall deal with that explanation at a later stage. I am trying at present only to show that he was one of the most important officers in the mela. It was,

therefore, very unfortunate that he could not arrive before the 6th of January, 1954. The result was that he got very little time fully to grasp all that was expected of him.

Other departments of Government, e.g., the Public Works Department and the Local Self-Government Engineering Department, co-operated whole-heartedly with Sri J. N. Ugra and Dr. V. P. Gupta, and the excellent work done by those departments deserves appreciation. It appears that, soon after taking up the mela work seriously, Sri Ugra realised that the resources of the Public Works Department would not enable them to cope with all the work that had to be done. So Sri Ugra secured the assistance of the Military Department. He must have had to approach the military authorities at the Centre. The result was that Col. V. V. Ruthnaswamy, Deputy Chief Engineer of a Corps in the Indian Army, arrived here about the middle of November, 1953. He had under his command Lt.-Col. A. L. Talwar and Lt.-Col. R. R. Bahl with all the units under their command. I have no hesitation in saying—and I am sure my learned colleagues agree with me—that the work done by these military engineers and the trained personnel under them was splendid. In fact, but for this assistance from the Military Department, it might have been difficult to organise the mela this year. The time available was so short and all that had to be done was of such magnitude. They built four over-bridges, two of which were of the dual-carriage-way type, over level crossings, constructed three pontoon bridges over the Ganga, which came to be known as bridges nos. 1, 2 and 3, sloped the western bank of the river Ganga with bulldozers to an easy gradient, constructed seven Control Towers, put up the fencing for barriers at the inoculation posts, did the dressing of most of the roads in the mela area, built about one and a half miles of brick road on the Jhusi side of the mela and did the levelling of the Parade area. They, further, provided about fifty searchlights, forty for use in the bathing areas and ten for use over bridges nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4. They also provided four motor boats for rescue work, two of which worked in the Ganga and two in the Yamuna. Col. Ruthnaswamy has, further, stated : “ We provided Army personnel for duty at the entrances to the pontoon bridges 1, 2 and 3 . . . On the 2nd February the number of our men on duty at the bridges was three hundred and was increased to four hundred on the 3rd February. Men of the police force were also

on duty there but they were controlling and guiding the traffic, whereas our men were there mainly for rescue work, i.e. to save people who fell down or were in danger of being crushed in the crowd. We were asked by the civil authorities on the 4th February at about 11 a.m. to take over complete charge of the Lost Persons Bureau and we did so. This Bureau was situated near the Central Control Room. We organised it and ran it for about forty-eight hours and then handed it over to the police authorities on the 6th February." It will thus be seen that the assistance given by the military engineers was very valuable.

It may be noted here that the Public Works Department constructs every year a pontoon bridge over the Ganga opposite Daraganj to connect the two ends of the Grand Trunk Road. This year that bridge was designated bridge no. 6. It appears that the mela officials were of the opinion that, in view of the number of the pilgrims expected to attend the mela this year, more bridges over the Ganga were required. The Public Works Department could construct only two. One of these was located close to the bridge just mentioned, that is the bridge which was this year called bridge no. 6, and was known as bridge no. 5. These two bridges were situated to the north of the metre gauge railway bridge. The other pontoon bridge built by the Public Works Department was located near the three bridges constructed by the military engineers and was known as bridge no. 4. Col. Ruthnaswamy has explained that the materials for the construction of the military pontoon bridges had to be obtained from various parts of the country and that, in view of the difficulty in obtaining more materials within the time available, he could not possibly construct more than three bridges. The result of the construction of these bridges was that there were six pontoon bridges, connecting the part of the mela area lying to the east of the Ganga with that lying to her west and available for up and down traffic between the two parts. All these bridges are shown in the map marked II.

A number of new roads were also constructed. Dealing first with the territory to the west of the Jawaharlal Nehru Road (Fort Road), there were, it will be noticed, two permanent *pakka* (macadamized) roads in existence, viz. the Jamuna Bank Road to the extreme south and the Triveni Road which intersects the Fort Road and goes on to the Bandh, joining it opposite Ramp no. 1. Two more roads were made in this area for the purposes of the mela.



One was immediately to the south of the Northern Railway line and was called Talab Nawal Rai Road and the other was to the south of Triveni Road and was called Kydgan Extension Road. These four roads were made available for the traffic coming from the city side, two of them being used for ingress and two for egress. Proceeding further north, there was the road shown in the map as "120 Feet Wide Road" which, crossing Fort Road, went up to the Bandh, meeting it opposite Ramp no. 2, and was commonly known as Kali Sarak. Several of the existing roads were re-dressed and widened wherever it was possible to do so. Every effort was made to widen the portion of Triveni Road lying between Fort Road and the Bandh as far as possible.

A new road, situated to the south of the Central Control Room and to the north of the Fort, was constructed on the west of the Bandh. It is shown in the map as "Return Road". It will be noticed that it crosses the Fort Road and leads on to the Kydganj Extension Road. It branched off from the Bandh Road at a point between Ramp no. 1 and Mahabirji Temple.

Coming now to the Sangam area, i.e. the land lying between the Ganga and the Bandh, there were two old roads in existence. One was that lying almost in the middle of this land which had always been used for the passage of the Akhara processions on their way to the Sangam. This was known as the Sangam Road. The other was the road lying immediately to the east of the eastern wall of the Fort and passing along the Akshaibat and the Mahabirji Temple and joining Ramp no. 1 near its eastern end. This has generally been described as Mahabirji Temple Road. The Sangam Road was extended up to a point opposite Ramp no. 2. A third road was made near the western bank of the Ganga commencing near the bathing area and ending at the western end of bridge no. 1. This may be called Gangapatti Road.

The existing roads in the Sangam area also were not only repaired and dressed but were also widened. The total width of the Sangam Road, according to Sri K. N. Misra, the Town and Village Planner, was planned to be increased to 200 feet. According to map Ex. 87, which was prepared at the request of this Committee by the Mela Engineer and signed by the Overseer on 14th February, 1954, it was 216 feet. This map is also appended to this Report. The

central portion of this road was reserved for the processions and was barricaded by means of ropes. Thus, large spaces on each side of the procession route were available for the pilgrims going to the Sangam. The width of Mahabirji Temple Road was increased to 120 feet. Sri K. N. Misra has, further, stated that the width of the new road, which I have called Gangapatti Road and which ran along the western bank of the Ganga and was prescribed as the return route for the Vairagi processions, was also 120 feet.

The regulations for the control of traffic, vehicular as well as pedestrian, were laid down in paragraph 44 and Appendix 'H' of Sri Tripathi's booklet, Ex. 49. Put shortly, they were these. No vehicles (with certain exceptions presently to be mentioned) were allowed to come into the mela area lying between the Fort Road and the Bandh on peak days. There are certain other documents dealing with the traffic plan and orders in connection with traffic. They are Exs. 50, 51, 52 and 53. The position, as it stood on the 3rd February, can best be explained by quoting a portion of the deposition of Sri R. B. Maelzer, Gazetted Officer Incharge Traffic :—" . . . without going into details, the object of all these rules was to ensure the safety as well as the convenience of the people coming to the mela, whether on foot or in vehicles. The orders were that on the peak days, which included the Amávasyá day (3rd February, 1954), no vehicular traffic of any kind was to be allowed inside the main mela area, particularly the Parade on the west of the Bandh and the Sangam area to the east of the Bandh along the bank of the Ganga down to the Sangam. There were, however, certain exceptions, e.g. the cars of the mela officers could come up to the Central Control Room. Again, the vans and jeeps of the Public Health Department could also come up to the Control Room. The vehicles belonging to the Military Department could also come up to the Control Room. The only vehicles which could be allowed to go across the Bandh on the 3rd February, or any other peak day, were ambulances or those of doctors on special duty. The vehicles of the military personnel on special duty could also be allowed to go across the Bandh on the peak days."

Rules as to the regulation of pedestrian traffic are to be found in paragraph 44, sub-paragraphs (e) and (f) and in Appendix 'H' from the bottom of page 54 to the top of page 15 of Ex. 49. Certain sentences from the deposition of Sri J. P. Tripathi can be usefully quoted in this connection. They are as follows :—"Ramp no. 1 had been divided

into four parts and demarcated by means of ropes tied to staves fixed in the ground. The rule for peak days was that only those people who were going to the Sangam for bathing could go by the Triveni Road and could descend by Ramp no. 1, in other words, that was the route for the incoming crowd. The three northern divisions of the Ramp were meant for the use of the pilgrims going towards the Sangam. The fourth division, i.e. the southernmost division, had been left for those persons who might insist on coming up Ramp no. 1 with the object of going to one of those huts or shops or temples which were situated roundabout that part of the Bandh. The men whom I posted in the middle of the Bandh Road at that place had orders to enforce these rules strictly. Two routes had been prescribed for pedestrians for their return after they had bathed in the Sangam, one along the banks of the Ganga for those who wanted to go towards Jhusi or towards Daraganj or who wanted to go to the city by Ramp no. 2 which had been exclusively reserved for the returning crowd. People returning from the Sangam with the intention of going towards the city had the option either of going by the Ramp no. 2 and the Kali Sarak route or by the other route which was as follows. After bathing, persons wishing to go towards the city could go along the route fixed for the return of the Sanyasi processions which passed in front of Mahabirji's temple but, on reaching near that spot where the road styled 'Return Road' branched off from the Bandh Road, they had to leave the Return Procession Route and to cross the Bandh and go along the 'Return Road'. It was the duty of the police posted at the top of the Bandh, as mentioned above, to prevent such people from moving northwards beyond the place where the 'Return Road' branched off."

The position thus was this. The incoming crowd was coming from three directions—east, north and west—and the whole of this crowd had to proceed southwards to reach the Sangam. Those from the east, i.e. from the Jhusi side, had to cross the Ganga by the bridges prescribed for the purpose. On reaching the Sangam sector, i.e. the open land between the Ganga and the Bandh, they mingled at some point or other with the crowds coming from other directions. I am not mentioning those who took boats on the eastern bank of the Ganga and went to the Sangam, bathed and went back by their boats, because they are not material for our purposes. Those coming from the north could come by two ways, either all along by the level

plain between the Ganga and the Bandh, approaching it at its northernmost point, or by the Bandh Road. These latter were not to be allowed to descend by Ramp no. 2 but had to go on southwards along the Bandh Road up to the point where it is joined by Triveni Road and had then to descend by Ramp no. 1. Those coming from the west, i.e. from the major portion of the town; from whichever road they approached the mela area, had to enter Triveni Road at its junction with Fort Road and to go along it to the Bandh and to descend by Ramp no. 1. These people constituted by far the largest proportion of the crowd of pilgrims. Thus, the pressure upon that part of Triveni Road which lies between the Fort Road and the Bandh can easily be imagined.

There were also the pilgrims who were arriving at the Sangam Railway Station by the trains of the Northern Railway. The exit for these passengers was towards the north, that is, they came out on Kali Sarak. These passengers must have interfered with the one-way traffic which had been prescribed, namely, that Kali Sarak was reserved for those who returned from the Sangam after bathing. These people must have approached the Bandh either from Kali Sarak or by proceeding along Kali Sarak up to the foot of the Bandh, then along the lane between the Sangam Railway Station enclosure and the Bandh and thereafter by Triveni Road to the top of the Bandh, descending by Ramp no. 1.

The rules for the passage of the Akhara processions may now be briefly described. In doing so, I shall confine myself to the 3rd February, 1954, for that is the date with which we are concerned. As has already been stated, there are eight such processions. The programme, on the 3rd of February, 1954, extended from 6 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. We are concerned with the first two Akhárás only, viz. the Máhanirváni Akhára and the Niranjani-cum-Juná Akhárás. They are both San-yasi Akhárás.

The programme for the Máhanirvani Akhára procession was that it had to leave its camp, situated on the eastern bank of the Ganga, at 6 a.m. reaching the eastern end of bridge no. 2 at 6.20 a.m. and the western end of the bridge at 6.30 a.m., and then, proceeding along Sangam Road, it had to reach the Sangam at 7 a.m. It had to start on its return journey, after bathing, at 7.45 a.m. by Mahabirji Temple Road, reaching the Bandh Police outpost, near

Ramp no. 1, at 08.05, western end of bridge no. 3 at 08.12, the eastern end of the bridge at 08.20 and its camp at 08.30 a.m.

The programme prescribed for the second procession, viz. the Niranjani-cum-Juná Akhárás, was as follows :—Leave camp at 7 a.m., reach eastern end of bridge no. 2 at 7.20, reach the western end of the bridge at 7.30 and, proceeding along Sangam Road, reach the Sangam at 8 a.m. ; start on the return journey after bathing at 9.15 along Mahabirji Temple Road, reach the Bandh Police outpost near Ramp no. 1, at 9.45, reach the western end of bridge no. 3 at 9.55 and its eastern end at 10.05 and, lastly, reach their camp at 10.20 a.m.

It may be mentioned that, at the request of the Committee, the mela officials had submitted statements giving details of their movements from 6 p.m. on the 2nd February, 1954 to 6 p.m. on the 3rd February, 1954. It would be convenient here to reproduce certain details of his movements given by Sri J. P. Tripathi, the Senior Superintendent of Police. The document in question is Ex. 86 on the record, and the details in question are as follows :—

February 2, 1954	4 p.m. to 7 p.m.	..	Made a round of bridgeheads and supervised arrangements.
	7 p.m. to 8 p.m.	..	Was in Control Room.
	8 p.m. to 10 p.m.	..	With I. G., D. I. G., "S" and D. I. G., C. I. D., for receiving instructions.
	10 p.m. to 12.30 a.m.		Was busy in taking stock of the situation on 2nd February, 1954, and finalising arrangements for 3rd February, 1954.

February 3, 1954. The entries under this date which need be reproduced are as follows :—

4 a.m. to 5 a.m.	..	Made a round on foot on Triven Road and Fort Return Road and supervised arrangements.
5 a.m. to 6.30 a.m.		Went to Sangam on horseback and supervised arrangements for Akharai procession routes and bathing ghats. Called men from Reserve and posted (them) at the Bandh Ramp.
6.30 a.m. to 7 a.m.		Met Inspector General of Police below the Bandh Ramp no. 1 and showed him round the procession routes and Sangam bathing ghats.

- 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. .. Supervised arrangements of Akhara procession routes and called another Reserve for the Bandh Ramp.
- 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. .. Was busy at the scene of tragedy in making arrangements for forming a cordon round the injured and dead, calling medical aid and ambulances, removing the injured to hospital and dead to Kotwali Parade and in removing property to Police Stations Kotwali Parade and Triveni Road. Simultaneously made arrangements for passage of processions and control of crowd. Called another Reserve and posted them on duty. Rescued many women and children including Sri Paripurnananda Ji of Banarās and Sri Ghosh, Editor of the "*Pioneer*" with two ladies.
- 5 p.m. .. On being called, appeared before the Prime Minister and Chief Minister of U. P. and on being questioned related the facts about the tragedy.
- 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. .. Was busy getting the property removed from scene to Kotwali Parade and P. S. Triveni Road.

The items with which I am concerned at this stage are those which show Sri Tripathi's movements from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the 3rd February, 1954. Apart from other points about which I may have to say something at a later stage, the fact necessary for our present purpose which emerges is that early in the morning Sri Tripathi took up a position on horseback near the Sangam Road at a point almost opposite the eastern end of Ramp no. 1. On map Ex. 87, which is appended to this Report, he has marked, with a cross the spot where he was about the time when the second Akhara procession was expected to pass on its way to the Sangam and has numbered it as "1".

## IV—THE TRAGEDY

Before dealing with the actual occurrence, it is necessary to give a short description of the conditions which prevailed for some time before it.

(a) *Antecedent Circumstances*

As has been stated above, the U. P. Government decided—and, if I may say so, very wisely decided—to enforce compulsory inoculation against cholera with effect from the 7th January, 1954. Whether it was due to this or, partly or wholly, due to other causes, the attendance on the opening day of the mela—Makara Sankranti, the 14th of January, 1954—was below what had been expected. Sri Ugra, the District Magistrate, in a Press Note issued by him on the 10th January, 1954, had said that “as reports go, it is expected the crowds will be of the order of ten or twelve lakhs.” Sri Babu Ram Gupta, the Additional Officer-in-Charge, has stated before us that the crowd on the 14th January, 1954, did not exceed seven lakhs. The next important bathing day fell on the 19th January, 1954. The attendance on that day also was practically the same. The evidence shows that this state of affairs continued up to the 28th of January, 1954. In the meantime, many people had been protesting against the imposition of compulsory inoculation. It is said that deputations waited upon the Minister in charge of the portfolio of Public Health in the Uttar Pradesh Government and requested him to withdraw the order. Even the press joined in these protests. It must be stated, however, that the main ground on which the objection of the newspapers to the compulsory inoculation was based was that a great deal of harassment was being caused to poor and ignorant pilgrims by the manner in which the scheme was being implemented, and that several ugly incidents had occurred. The Government yielded and withdrew the order. The newspapers published on the morning of the 28th January, 1954, announced the decision of the Government on their front pages under big headlines and claimed that their stand had been vindicated. The unfortunate part of it, however, appears to have been that, as far as one can see, the mela officials were not consulted before the decision to withdraw the order imposing compulsory inoculation was arrived at by the Government. Sri A. S. Baghel, the Officer-in-Charge of the Mela, has stated before us : “I remember having read in the newspapers about the 28th

January, 1954, that the U. P. Government had withdrawn the order requiring cholera inoculation. I have no knowledge beyond what appeared in the newspapers as to the reasons which persuaded the U. P. Government to withdraw the order." Sri Babu Ram Gupta, the Additional Officer-in-Charge, has made the following statements on the subject :—"Looking at the crowd on the 14th January, which was about seven lakhs, we came to the conclusion that the crowd on the Amávasyá day would not exceed twenty-five lakhs. The officials in charge of the mela did not feel any disappointment at the fact that the crowd on the Sankranti day was so small. There was no question of disappointment so far as we were concerned. We did feel that people had not assembled in such large numbers as expected because they had been discouraged by the strictness with which the cholera inoculation was insisted upon by the Government. I did not suggest that the rule requiring pilgrims to be inoculated against cholera before coming to Allahabad be withdrawn or relaxed. I have not also seen anything in any official file or paper showing that the Officer-in-Charge or the District Magistrate or any other official made any such suggestion to the Government. The rule was, however, cancelled by the Government a few days before Amávasyá. I am not quite sure, but I think it was about six or seven days before the 3rd February, 1954. I do not know why the Government cancelled the rule." Be that as it may, the result of the withdrawal of the order imposing compulsory inoculation only a few days before the Amávasya (3rd February, 1954), which is the most important bathing day, was unfortunate. A number of witnesses have made statements on this point. It will be sufficient, however, to quote the relevant portions from the statements of two witnesses. This is what Pandit Bishambhar Nath Pande has stated :—

"The attendance in the Kumbha fair was quite poor up to the 28th of January, but after that date the crowds increased enormously. This increase in the attendance of pilgrims after the 28th January was, in my opinion, due to the lifting of the order requiring inoculation against cholera before any one could enter Allahabad. I used to visit the Central Control Room every now and then, and I gathered from the conversations that I had with the officials there that, in view of the attendance of the pilgrims up to the 25th January, they did not expect more than twenty lakhs of people to come for bathing on the Amávasya day. The result was that the Railways, the Public Health



Department and possibly other departments reduced the staff which they had employed when they were expecting a larger crowd. When the sudden onrush of pilgrims began after the 28th of January and continued increasing every day thereafter, the Mela officials felt that they had been placed at a disadvantage and that, if they had known that there would be such a rush, they would not have reduced the staff. Evidently, they could not at that stage take steps to call back the employees whom they had sent away". Pandit Bishambhar Nath Pande was the Chairman of the Allahabad Municipal Board up to the time that Government appointed an Administrator in July, 1953. He is a resident of Allahabad and is a well-known citizen. He has been attending the Kumbha fairs since the year 1918 and has attended all the Kumbha fairs since then. Mahant Sri Kishore Das Ji, Mahant of the Panchayati Bará Akhára, has stated as follows : "The U. P. Government had, in the beginning, imposed a toll tax and had also made cholera inoculation compulsory. The result was that the crowd on the Sankránti day (14th January, 1954), was not very heavy. Some time after the Sankránti, the toll tax was removed and the order about compulsory inoculation was also lifted. The result was that such an immense crowd poured into Prayaga for the Amávasyá day. The Mela authorities had not expected such a vast concourse and could not make adequate arrangements for it."

A large number of witnesses have testified to the immensity and the density of the crowds on the morning of the 3rd February and during the night preceding it. It appears from the evidence that by about midnight between the 2nd and the 3rd February, the crowds had assumed tremendous proportions. I shall again quote from the statement of Pandit Bishambhar Nath Pande. He has stated that the Congress Party had a camp in the mela which was known as the Kumbha Seva Shivar and was situated on Kali Sarak, next to Annapoorna and opposite to the Public Health Department compound, and that, whenever he had to stay in the mela, he used to put up in that camp. He has, further, stated that on the 2nd February, 1954, he had remained in the mela up to 11 p.m. He goes on to say : "I found even at that time that the land on both sides of the Bandh was overflowing with pilgrims. Streams of pilgrims were still arriving with the result that there had collected, as I have said in the written statement, a capacity crowd on both sides of the Bandh and every inch of available space was occupied by

pilgrims. It did occur to some of us, who were Congress workers, that it would be advisable to contact the District Magistrate and to invite his attention to the fact that the crowds that had already gathered were enormous and that, as the night advanced and the morning approached, the problems with which the authorities would be confronted would become difficult and serious. The District Magistrate, however, was extremely busy and we did not find it possible to contact him . . . . Thousands of pilgrims were staying with the Pragwals. All the available accommodation had already been occupied by midnight. As pilgrims continued pouring in, those who could not afford to have their own camps and who were not able to obtain accommodation in the sheds and tents mentioned above, squatted on the land to the east of the Bandh and many of them put up some sort of a covering over their heads for the night, using *dhotis*, blankets and such other articles of personal use." It appears from Sri Pande's statement that the sheds mentioned by him had been constructed by the Municipal Board and the tents, 200 in number, had been put up by Messrs. Lallooji & Sons under the orders of the District Magistrate. Free accommodation was provided in these sheds and tents to poor pilgrims.

As the night advanced, conditions grew worse. I shall again refer to the deposition of Pandit Bishambhar Nath Pande. As has been stated above, he had gone back home about 11 p.m. on the 2nd February. He had to broadcast, for the All-India Radio, a running commentary on the morning of the 3rd February from the watch tower near the Sangam bathing area. So he left his house, in a station wagon belonging to the All-India Radio, at 3.30 a.m. on the 3rd February. He has stated that the crowd on the Grand Trunk Road at that time was 40 deep and progress was so slow that it took him about half an hour to reach the parking ground in the Parade Area, a distance of about one and a quarter miles from his residence in South Malaka. He, further, states: "We proceeded to walk along the Kali Sarak and we found that the entire width of the road, together with the *patris* on either side, was occupied by a double stream of pedestrians, one going towards the Bandh and the other returning from the Bandh . . . . The result was that the traffic regulations were all upset and this, in my opinion, was due to the density of the crowd." He says that he reached the watch tower about 5 a.m. and goes on to say: "When I was walking to the watch

tower along the land to the east of the Bandh, I noticed that a very large number of people, who had already bathed, had taken up positions on both sides of the road reserved for the Akhára processions going to the Sangam and also on both sides of Mahabir Ji Temple Road by which the Akhára processions were to return from the Sangam. They were squatting on the ground with their bag and baggage and were actually trespassing upon the said roads, with the result that the width of these roads had been reduced. I advised these people to move away and not to stay there because that might be dangerous for them if large crowds passed along those places. They did not listen to my advice." Lower down he states : "There were three roads in this part of the Sangam Area, (1) the Gangapatti Road by which the Bairagi processions had to return from the Sangam, (2) the Mahabirji Temple Road by which the Sanyasi processions had to return from the Sangam, and (3) what I have called the middle road, that is, the road by which all the processions had to go to the Sangam. Not only were these roads very wide, but there was also considerable space between the roads. Unfortunately, half of this open space had been occupied by volunteers' rest camps, Local Self-Government Engineering Department offices, Kotwali and outposts, Area Magistrate's office, trench latrines and shops. The other half was occupied by pilgrims who were bivouacking there and by a large number of beggars whose number was at least 10,000. The result was that there was very little room left for pedestrians to move about and they had no option but to walk along the roads meant for the Akhára processions."

As the morning advanced, the situation went on deteriorating fast. Numerous independent witnesses, drawn from different sections of society, have deposed that by about 8 o'clock the conditions had become almost intolerable. Many of them have said that the atmosphere was suffocating and that people began to feel faint and thirsty and began to perspire and to find their clothes oppressive. It may be mentioned that it is fairly cold in Allahabad in the first week of February, specially in the morning. It has also been stated that the condition of those who were short-statured, and of the aged and the infirm, particularly women, was serious. Even those who are not short—e.g. Sri O. N. Misra, Sri R. P. Puri, etc.—found the position exhausting and intolerable. No one, however, could, according to the evidence, get out of the crowd because the pressure from behind was relentless

and irresistible. For example, Sri S. N. Ghosh, Editor of the '*Pioneer*', who was staying in the Press Camp situated to the west of the Fort Road and to the south of the Northern Railway line, states : "We threaded our way to the Bandh by the Triveni Road. I had left the Press Camp at about 8 a.m. and it took us some considerable time to reach the Bandh, say about an hour. This was due to the density of the crowd. Near the Bandh, even near the Control Room, the crowd was so dense that we felt that we were being pushed by the crowd and had very little independence of movement." It may be mentioned that the distance from the Press Camp to the junction of Triveni Road with the bottom of the western slope of the Bandh is about five furlongs.

It may also be mentioned here that all the open space that was available, outside the enclosures of the Sangam Railway Station and of the Military Stores, in that part of the Parade Area which lies between Fort Road and the Bandh, was occupied by various camps and shops, etc. The result was that those who entered that part of the Parade Area from the west by the only two roads that existed, namely, Triveni Road and Kali Sarak (entering the latter in contravention of the traffic rules) had no means of escape when they realized that the situation was dangerous. The situation on Triveni Road was particularly bad because the major portion of the crowd coming from the town of Allahabad entered the Parade Area by this road.

The chaotic conditions existing in the Parade Area mentioned above were made still worse by the fact that train kept on arriving at the broad-gauge Sangam Station and the metre-gauge Daraganj Station at least up to 7 a.m. There is some little controversy on this subject. The mela authorities allege that there was a clear understanding between them and the railways that no special trains would be brought to the Daraganj and the Sangam stations after 4 a.m. on the 3rd February, but this allegation is not admitted in its entirety on behalf of at least the North-Eastern Railway. It is not necessary for us to enter into the merits of this controversy. Confining ourselves to the period before the occurrence of the tragedy, it is clear from a communication, dated the 6th of April, 1954, received from Sri B. Arora, General Manager of the North-Eastern Railway, and from a D. O. no. AO/KM/33-53, dated the 13th February, 1954, received from Sri M. A. Rao, who was the Special Officer in charge of railway arrangements for the Kumbh Mela and was designated Administrative Officer,

Kumbha Mela, that trains arrived at Daraganj up to 6.50 a.m. and at Sangam Station up to 8.30 a.m.

Conditions across the Bandh, on Ramp no. 1, were, for obvious reasons, still worse. In the first place, people coming from the north along the Bandh Road had also joined those coming along the Tri-veni Road and were going down the slope. In the second place, the ground was somewhat slippery as there had been some rain on the previous day and also during the night. Thirdly, the traffic regulations having broken down, people returning from the Sangam after bathing were using this ramp for going up to the Bandh and were thus adding to the confusion prevailing there.

There was yet another factor which appears to have contributed materially to the size of the tragedy. It appears that a number of ditches existed between Ramp no. 1 and Ramp no. 2 and water from various sources had collected in them. Sri J. P. Tripathi, Senior Superintendent of Police, has stated that the District Magistrate had ordered all these ditches to be filled up and that, although the majority of them had been filled up, the one which was situated almost immediately to the north of Ramp no. 1 had, through some oversight, been left unfilled by those who were in charge of that work. It appears that this ditch was fairly large in extent, though it was not very deep, the depth being about 12 to 18 inches. Not only was there water in the ditch, but the ground round about it was full of slush and mud and was slippery. It appears that those who escaped in that direction immediately after the stampede, presently to be described, were able to see the ground and to avoid the slippery portions. A little later, however, there was a general rush in that direction and a number of people slipped and fell down and were trampled upon.

It has also been stated by many witnesses, including Sri S. N. Ghosh and others whose impartiality, intelligence and capacity for observation cannot be doubted, that they did not see any policeman on their way to the Bandh along Triveni Road. When Sri J. P. Tripathi was being examined before the Committee, his attention was drawn to the fact that such evidence had been given and he was asked to give his explanation. He stated: "I have already given the number of policemen who were posted on these roads. I can only say that, being foot police, they got engulfed in the crowd and so were not noticeable. The fact that they were all Provincial

Armed Constabulary men who had no turbans but only *khaki* caps may also have been responsible to some extent for their not being noticed." The explanation given by Sri Tripathi appears to be correct, but the fact remains that the policemen who had been posted in this locality—apart from the question of what their number was—were rendered wholly ineffective by the density of the crowd. They were not even noticeable, to say nothing of their being able to guide, control or assist anybody.

Such were the antecedent circumstances or—to borrow the language used by our medical friends—the 'predisposing causes'. I may recapitulate them :—

1. (a) An embargo on entry into Allahabad without inoculation against cholera was imposed with effect from the 7th January, 1954.

(b) The size of the crowd of pilgrims on Makara Sankranti (14th January) and lunar eclipse (19th January) days was below that expected. This, somewhat naturally, might have induced a feeling of complacency in the minds of the mela officials, including railway officials.

(c) The embargo was suddenly lifted on the 25th or the 26th January, most probably without consulting the mela officials.

(d) The result was that an avalanche of humanity descended upon Prayaga.

2. (a) Only one route for ingress, viz. Triveni Road, was prescribed for the major portion of the crowd, namely that coming from the main parts of the town.

(b) The density of the crowd in that part of the Parade Area which lies between Fort Road and the Bandh began to assume alarming proportions shortly after midnight and during the early hours of the morning of the 3rd February and, as the morning advanced, it became, particularly on Triveni Road and on Ramp no. 1, unbearable and suffocating. The traffic regulations broke down completely and utter confusion prevailed.

(c) The situation on Ramp no. 1 was particularly bad because the crowd coming from Triveni Road was joined by those coming from the north along the Bandh Road. There are also

the facts that on Ramp no. 1 people had to go down a slope and the surface of the slope was slippery. Sri J. P. Tripathi has said that clinker had been spread on the ramp, but the evidence shows that, in spite of this treatment, the surface was still somewhat slippery. A number of witnesses, including Pandit Kanhaiya Lal Misra, Advocate General, U. P., have testified to this fact.

(d) Conditions in the Sangam area were no better. An additional feature in that area was that a large number of pilgrims, specially those who had arrived during the night, and beggars were squatting over whatever open spaces were available.

3. All the open spaces in the Parade as well as the Sangam areas were covered up by camps, etc.

4. The fact that trains kept coming to Daraganj and Sangam Railway stations even on the morning of the 3rd February still further aggravated the situation. There is evidence to show that some of the passengers arriving by one or more of these trains, evidently thinking that they were getting late for bathing at the proper time, rushed to the Sangam from the station with their baggage, either on their own heads or on the heads of coolies, and that, when they found that the situation was dangerous, they or their coolies threw down the baggage on the ground with the result that these packages became stumbling blocks, in the literal sense, for the pilgrims who came rushing down.

5. There were several ditches between Ramp no. 1 and Ramp no. 2. Although the majority of them had been filled up, a big ditch, situated immediately to the north of Ramp no. 1, had remained unfilled and there was water and mud therein and the surrounding land was full of slush and mud.

6. The policemen, who are said to have been posted on Tri-veni Road from Fort Road eastwards, belonged to the Provincial Armed Constabulary who do not wear turbans and they got lost in the crowd and became helpless and useless.

7. Lastly, there is one important fact which must be emphasised here, although it has already been indicated in Chapter III above. As the description of the rules for the regulation of pedestrian traffic and for the passage of the Akhara processions

given in Chapter III above will show, the routes prescribed were such that the pedestrians had to come in contact with the Akhara processions in more than one place in that part of the Sangam area which lay between the western end of bridge no. 3 and the toe of Ramp no. 1. Of these places, the most important and dangerous was the spot where Mahabirji Temple Road joins Ramp no. 1, and we are concerned only with this spot.

(b) *What happened.*

It makes one sad to reflect that, but for certain unforeseen incidents, not very important in themselves, for which the first Akhara procession was responsible, the tragedy in question would not, in all probability, have happened, and the 1954 Kumbha would have gone down in history as a brilliant success. As is well known, one does not necessarily contract any serious disease simply because of the existence of pre-disposing causes. To borrow again the phraseology of the doctors, an 'exciting cause' is required. A collection of inflammable material requires a spark to ignite it. In the case with which we are concerned, this exciting cause, or spark, was provided by the unforeseen incidents referred to above. Their nature will appear from what follows.

Several classes of witnesses have been examined before us in connection with this part of the case. There are those who were in the crowd at that time and were injured (e.g. Sri Avadh Behari Saran, Advocate, Patna, etc.); there are those who were there but escaped unhurt or received only slight injuries (e.g. Pandit Kanahiya Lal Misra—who actually fell down but managed to get up—Sri Paripurnanand Varma, M.L.A., Professor S. C. Deb, Sri S. N. Ghosh, Sri O.N. Misra, etc.); and, lastly, there are those who were not involved in the stampede and were at places from which they could see objectively what actually happened. It is obvious that for our present purpose, namely the ascertainment of what precisely happened, the witnesses of the last of the three categories mentioned above are the most important. Of them, the two who have given the most valuable evidence are Srimati Shanta Devi of Allahabad and Sri Narain Datt Pandey of Banaras.

Srimati Shanta Devi is the wife of Pandit Bishambhar Nath Pandey. On the morning of the 3rd February, 1954, she went to the mela in the company of her cousin and other relations with the intention of bathing in the Sangam. Her small daughter, aged about five years,



was also with her. They reached the Bandh opposite Triveni Road about 6 o'clock. Her cousin and other relations went away towards the Sangam behind the first Akhara procession. Srimati Shanta Devi preferred to stay behind because she felt that it was risky to proceed further with her little daughter. There is a temple at the northern edge of Ramp no. 1, a little above its toe, and it has a platform (*chabutra*) facing south and east. Srimati Shanta Devi stood there with her back to the wall of the temple, feeling that she and her daughter would be safe there. She states :—"By 8.30 a.m. the pressure of the crowd became so intense that I did not think it safe to remain there. Somebody standing on the temple platform recognized me and asked me to come over there with my daughter. I accepted the advice but in making my way I had to struggle hard for 20 minutes in reaching the temple platform. By this time the elephants of the first procession had returned back from the Sangam to the Triveni Road slope"—i.e. Ramp no. 1. She then states that the crowd in all directions had become absolutely stationary on account of the procession and that there were four currents of crowd meeting there, (1) from Jhusi side coming over the bridge, (2) from the north side by the Black Road, (3) returning from the Sangam and (4) descending from Triveni Road slope. She proceeds :—"The condition of the crowd on the Triveni Road slope was most pitiable. There was constant pressure on them from behind. They were standing there in a stationary condition for about an hour. Many ladies were feeling almost exhausted on account of pressure. Just beneath the temple, the corner space between the ditch and the slope was occupied by half a dozen Sadhus. They had covered two-thirds of the corner space by an improvised Shamiana and the remaining one-third of the space was occupied by over a hundred beggars. At about 9.15 a.m. I noticed a void on the road reserved for processions. The vanguard of the procession by this time had reached the other part of the bridge. All the four human currents coming from opposite directions vied with one another to occupy the void left by the Akhara. In doing so they struck against each other. Then suddenly the tail-end of the Akhara procession, which was somehow or other cut off from the main procession, appeared on the scene. The crowd was again asked to make way for the rear part of the procession to join the main procession which was still standing on the bridge. This sudden obstruction of the forward movement of the crowd created confusion. The people on the slope were in a most disadvantageous position. The

descending crowds on the left side of the slope were forced to turn towards the corner space round the temple platform, and then followed the stampede. Many people fell down upon the beggars and those coming from behind trampled over their bodies. The only available space to save oneself from getting trampled was a 4 to 6 feet uneven and slippery passage that lay between the north-east corner of the temple and the ditch. A large number of people wanted to escape to the Bandh by this passage. The Sadhus, instead of helping the distressed (men, women and children) by allowing them to pass through their own Shamiana, began to assault indiscriminately trespassing men and women with their long Chintas. My daughter first drew my attention and asked me as to why the Sadhus were beating the people with their Chintas. Scores of people who wanted to ascend the slope fell in the ditch on account of the terror of these Sadhus. Then followed a general stampede and utter confusion. The pressure was forcing the people to tread over the bodies of the injured and the dead. The confusion must have lasted for about fifteen minutes . . . The whole tragedy happened before my very eyes." Chintas are long iron tongs. She expresses the opinion that this tragedy would not have occurred if there had been no break in the Akhara procession because, when once the surging crowd had occupied the void, it proved fatal to thrust it back and that the rapid forward and sudden backward movement bewildered the crowd and resulted in creating general confusion. She proceeds : "Had not the corner space been occupied by a large number of beggars and others, the people would have got breathing space. The violence of the Sadhus sealed the only way of escape from death and injuries."

Sri Narain Datt Pandey belongs to a well-known family of Banaras. His father was the late Pandit Lakshmikant Pandey and his uncle was the late Pandit Umakant Pandey, both of whom were prominent legal practitioners of Banaras. He had come to Allahabad with the intention of bathing in the Sangam and left the place where he was staying in Bai-ka-Bagh for the mela area on foot about 7 o'clock on the morning of the 3rd February. The crowd being dense, his progress was slow and he reached the Bandh opposite Triveni Road about 9 o'clock. He says that he saw a 'vast concourse of human beings' and also saw a procession of Nagas at the bottom of the slope and felt that it would not be safe to go to the Sangam. He then goes on to say :—"The procession of Nagas was on its way back from the Sangam and the

majority of them had reached one of the bridges, but about 50 or 60 Nagas were at the bottom of the slope in front of the Bandh. I managed with considerable difficulty to go 10 or 12 paces down the slope, keeping near its left edge, and reached the temple which is situated there. It has a Peepal tree and a *chabutra*. As I had decided not to proceed to the Sangam until the crowd had thinned and the Naga procession had passed, I climbed up to the *chabutra* of that temple and stayed there. There were about 300 or 400 people who had sought refuge on that *chabutra*. Crowds of people were pouring in from all directions and the Nagas who were at the bottom of the slope had obstructed the passage of the crowd into the Sangam area. I had noticed on earlier occasions that the Nagas do not like the crossing of their route by any pilgrim. This is what has led to the tragedy at this year's Kumbha. . . . At that time that particular procession had been split up into two parts. The major portion had gone across the bridge and a group of 50 or 60 Nagas had been left behind who were standing in front of the slope. These Nagas were anxious to proceed as quickly as possible in order that they might join the main body of the procession and they did not want that anybody should come in their way. I saw that a pilgrim wanted to cross the road on which the Nagas were going and the Nagas did not like it. One of the Nagas pushed him and threw him back into the crowd. That same pilgrim tried again to go across the procession. Upon this another Naga attacked him with his *Chimta* and threw him back into the crowd. This spread terror among the pilgrims and a clash ensued between some of the pilgrims and the Nagas. The Nagas then started attacking the crowd with their *Chimtas*. The crowd became panic-stricken and began to run helter skelter in all directions for safety. Many villagers who had lathis began to attack the fleeing crowd with their lathis in order to save themselves and several pilgrims received injuries. This is how the stampede began and brought about the tragedy. To the left of the temple there was a ditch in which there was some water. On the land immediately to the north of the temple there were some pilgrims taking rest after having finished their bath in the Sangam. In the vicinity of the ditch hundreds of beggars were sitting. As a result of the stampede almost all those who were sitting on the ground were trampled upon. People also fell down into the ditch. At that moment no one realized what had happened. . . . As a result of the ill-treatment meted out by the Nagas to the pilgrims, the crowd became panic-stricken and people began to

run away, abandoning their intention to bath. Another circumstance which led to the tragedy was this. Many people in the crowd had brought their luggage over their heads or over the heads of coolies. When the stampede started, they fled away to save their lives dropping their bundles on the ground. People who were running away stumbled against those bundles and fell down."

The facts which emerge from the statements of these two witnesses, who saw the occurrence from a distance of a few feet, are these. Somehow or other, the rear portion, consisting of 50 or 60 naked Sadhus, of the Mahanirvani (Sanyasi) Akhára was cut off from the main body of the procession near the junction of Mahabirji Temple Road and Ramp no. 1. The front portion of the Akhára having gone ahead, the crowd, which had with extreme difficulty been waiting for some considerable time on the steep ramp because of the slow progress of the front portion of the Akhára in front of it, naturally rushed forward as soon as that part of the Akhára had passed on. While the crowd was in this manner pouring into the Sangam area, the rear portion of the Akhára reached the junction of Mahabirji Temple Road and the ramp and so efforts were made to hold the crowd back again to enable these Nagas to proceed. It was very difficult, almost impossible, for the crowd to stop after it had once begun to rush forward, specially because of the pressure from behind. Those who were coming on to the ramp from Triveni Road did not know that a part of the procession had again come in front and that they were required to stop. The Nagas resented the crossing of their route by the pilgrims and one or some of them attacked one or more of the pilgrims with their long iron Chintas. This resulted in panic and stampede. The instinct of self-preservation is so strong that, in the effort to save themselves, human beings, for a few minutes, ceased to be human beings and did things which normally they would never dream of doing. I do not think they were conscious of what they were doing. Sri O. N. Misra, I.A.S., Labour Commissioner, U. P., who has already been referred to, and Sri D. C. Bhattacharya, a member of the staff of the "Amrita Bazar Patrika", have stated that they saw men walking over the shoulders and heads of other human beings on the ramp.

Other witnesses have also spoken about the desperate condition of the crowd on Ramp no. 1, specially near its bottom, and have said that, in their anxiety to save themselves, people were behaving

in a frenzied manner, their sole desire being to extricate themselves without caring what effect their actions would have on others. As I have said above, the statements of Srimati Shanta Devi and Sri Narain Datt Pandey are the most important in connection with this part of the case, because they saw this occurrence, which took place near the toe of Ramp no. 1, near and round its north-east corner, from beginning to end at close quarters from a position of vantage, viz. the platform of the temple. It will be noted that this part of the tragedy occurred at places which were to the west of the returning procession.

Then there is the statement of Sri D. C. Bhattacharya which describes what happened in the plain to the east of the returning procession. He left the "Amrita Bazar Patrika" camp, which was situated to the west of the Post and Telegraph Office, for the Bandh via Triveni Road about 7 a.m. He says that from the corner of the Telegraph Office the roads leading to the Bandh were "filled to capacity" by pilgrims and that "it was a march of humanity." According to him, people walked forty abreast and even hundred abreast at places. He says that the rush was the greatest near the approaches to the Bandh and that he moved very slowly, "as it were, being carried along in the human stream." He states that he found the northernmost of the four divisions of the ramp less crowded than the others and so managed to go down the ramp without difficulty. The time then was about 8 a.m. He noticed that the first Akhara procession was returning from the Sangam along Mahabirji Temple Road and so, with the object of having what he calls "a full view of the procession from close quarters" in order that he might be able to give a detailed report of the procession in his paper, he stopped near the toe of the ramp. He states: "I, therefore, stationed myself just along the procession route, the Ramp no. 1 being in my front I was about 20 yards east of the line where the slope met the level ground." His evidence deals with incidents which happened some time before those deposed to by Srimati Shanta Devi and Sri Narain Datt Pandey. No part of the procession had reached the junction of Mahabirji Temple Road and Ramp no. 1 up to the time that Sri Bhattacharya took up his position. He says that, as the procession came nearer, "the crowd swelled". After stating that "gradually the procession came in my front" he goes on to describe some of the component parts of the procession — the elephants with their silver

howdahs, the decorated cars, etc. He then proceeds : " I could command a view of a very small part of the long procession, the tail end of which must have been somewhere near Mahabirji's Temple . . . The procession moved slowly towards the north. After the cars, the jeep and some elephants had moved off, the procession came to a sudden halt. Two big elephants stood in my front on the route, one behind the other leaving a gap of about fifty paces. I did not know what this sudden halt meant. The procession remained stationary for a considerable length of time and when I looked at a watch again it was past 9 a.m. A notebook and a pencil in hand, I stood watching the paraphernalia of the Sadhus in their stately procession flanked by a vast crowd on either side. As far as my eyes could reach, I saw only human heads . . . The concourse presented a vast sea of humanity. . . . it was the main Kumbh bathing day and I was in the midst of the multitude to report . . . A few moments of this meditative mood had passed when I saw the restive crowd on the western flank of the procession attempting to push forward. There were no policemen nor volunteers noticeable who could hold the advancing crowd down the Ramp no. 1 in check. I remember having seen one or two Nagas alight from the back of an elephant *trishuls* in hand, and push back those who were about to break into the procession line. Some other Sadhus also joined the Nagas. The two elephants were still standing apart with a gap between them. Suddenly a person ventured forth and ran through the gap across the procession to its eastern flank where I and others like myself stood. This man breaking away from his line gave a fillip to others and so was quickly followed by a second, a third, a fourth and a fifth one and then a countless number that sallied forth upon us like streams in flood during the rains hurtling down the hill sides. It was so sudden and so forceful that I could not stand the impact and was pushed a few yards behind in the direction of the Ganga . . . But there was a tremendous pressure from the rear also and, when I looked about, I shuddered to think of my fate and the fate of a thousand others who were sandwiched between two surging waves of the vast concourse. Pushing, jostling, shouldering and elbowing continued and a struggle between life and death, . . . in a valley of death, started in full fury . . . People pressed each other as if squeezing to flatten themselves . . . The people fiercely pushing each other showed no signs of composure. The pressure increased more and more, and

ultimately it became physically impossible for me to suffer the strain any longer. . . . My feet struck against something on the ground. It felt like a human body. But how to look down? The crowd was so thick and compact that there was hardly any sufficient gap between two persons to afford visibility downwards. . . . It was fatal to bend or stoop. . . . My vital struggle continued for a considerable time. . . . It was an hour of grim struggle. . . . all pushed and strove to move whichever way there was safety. . . . I shouted for help, but there was no policeman, no volunteer, nor a life-saver noticeable nearby. The wails and groans of the victims were lost in the tumult. The Sadhus shouted 'Jais', brandished tridents and waved flags as they marched on. Their *trishuls* rather frightened the people who stumbled and fell. Some Sadhus were found striking the persons who were near them. The procession moved on with all its splendour and pomp absolutely unconcerned of the trails of death behind. . . . In the direction of the trenches to the north of the ramp some persons were laying sticks forcibly on the crowd. . . . Heavy loads fell down from the heads or shoulders of pilgrims causing injuries to some. These also caused much obstruction to the free movement of the crowd. . . . I got completely exhausted. . . . Mine was a providential escape. God heard my prayer and led me out of the death trap. Slowly and slowly I advanced northwards threading my way. . . . Many people did not know anything about the tragedy till 12 noon and they were seen going merrily trekking towards the Sangam." According to him, three things happened which were the immediate causes of the stampede which brought about this tragedy : (1) the fact that the Akhára procession which was returning from the Sangam suddenly became stationary when its front portion had reached the place where Ramp no. 1 joins the level ground and remained stationary for a considerable length of time ; (2) that, while the procession was stationary, the crowd on the western side of the procession rushed through a gap between two elephants and swept across the procession route towards the east ; and (3) that some of the Nagas and other Sadhus waved their tridents and whatever else they held in their hands in such a manner that the crowds became still more frightened and excited.

As I have observed above, the statement of Sri Bhattacharya deals with what happened in the plain to the east of the procession which, with its elephants and other paraphernalia, was returning

from the Sangam and was going northwards along the line where Mahabirji Temple Road merges in the slope of Ramp no. 1 in the upper part of its toe. It would appear that those who were on the ramp and on the platform of the temple on the northern edge of the ramp could not see what was happening in the plain, as their view was obstructed by the elephants and other paraphernalia of the procession and by the vast multitude. The statements of Srimati Shanta Devi and Sri Narain Datt Pandey, on the other hand, deal with events which happened, a little later, near the western edge of the line where Mahabirji Temple Road merges in the slope of Ramp no. 1 and in its immediate vicinity, at the time when the separated rear portion of the procession arrived at that place.

In the map, Ex. 87, which has already been mentioned, Sri J. P. Tripathi has marked, by means of crosses in red ink, the places where those who had been killed and those who had been injured were found by him and has numbered these places as '2', '3' and '4'. Those who were at the places marked '3' and '4' were evidently the victims of the earlier incident, described by Sri Bhattacharya, and those who were found at the place marked '2' must have been the victims of the incident described by Srimati Shanta Devi and Sri Narain Datt Pandey. It will be remembered that the spot marked '1' was the place where Sri Tripathi had stationed himself.

The statements of Sri Tripathi, on this part of the case, are in consonance with those of Srimati Shanta Devi, Sri Narain Datt Pandey and Sri D. C. Bhattacharya in all material particulars, but there is some confusion as to the sequence in which events occurred. It will be recalled that the deposition of Sri D. C. Bhattacharya shows that the events deposed to by him were anterior, in time, to those mentioned by Srimati Shanta Devi and Sri Narain Datt Pandey. Sri Tripathi, on the other hand, says that he heard a noise from the north-east corner of Ramp no. 1 first, that, when he was proceeding in that direction to see what had happened, he heard a noise from the direction of the spot in the plain which he has marked '3' in map Ex. 87 and that a few minutes later he heard a third noise which proceeded from the direction of the spot which he has marked '4' in that map. It is neither possible nor necessary to investigate the cause of this disagreement as to the order in which the mishaps in the three spots took place. The material fact that emerges is that



mishaps occurred in these places in fairly quick succession. In view of all the circumstances which prevailed at that time, a little confusion as to the sequence is, perhaps, inevitable.

Another circumstance, which too appears to have made a material contribution to the totality of circumstances which were responsible for these mishaps, may be mentioned here. It has been stated by Pandit Bishambhar Nath Pandey that the first Akhára procession reached the Sangam by about 6.50 a.m. That was in accordance with the programme prescribed by the authorities. According to that programme, it should have left the Sangam, after bathing, at 7.45 a.m. and should have reached the police outpost near the junction of Mahabirji Temple Road and the slope of Ramp no. 1 at 8.05 a.m. The evidence shows, however, that it actually reached there about 9 a.m. According to Pandit Bishambhar Nath Pandey what happened was this. There were more than a dozen motor cars in this procession and the engines of these cars got overheated in consequence of the crawling pace at which they had to proceed in the procession. This delayed the return journey of the Akhára by nearly one hour, and, so, the time tables of the other processions were also upset. One result of this was that the second procession, viz. that of the Niranjani-cum-Juna (Sanyasi) Akhára, which should have passed the spot marked '1' in Ex. 87 (where Sri J. P. Tripathi was) a few minutes after 7.20 a.m., actually arrived there about 9 o'clock when the first returning procession had also reached the junction of Mahabirji Temple Road and the slope of Ramp no. 1. Thus, there were two processions in front of those who were on Ramp no. 1 and the Bandh. This fact on the one hand, must have made the task of the police on duty in that area more difficult, and, on the other, appears to have unduly distracted the attention of the crowds round about that locality. Pandit Kanahiya Lal Misra has stated that, when he got to the top of the Bandh by the Kali Sarak about 8.30 a.m., the first thing which struck him was that the entire crowd on the Bandh Road was stationary and was facing eastwards watching some Akhara procession below. He himself did not stop to watch the procession and did not at that time notice in which direction the procession was moving. He and his party threaded their way southward through the crowd on the Bandh Road, to that part of the Bandh which is opposite Triveni Road, with the intention of going down by Ramp no. 1. He states that it was only when he had commenced

the descent that he noticed that there were actually two Akhara processions in front of that ramp and that one of them was proceeding towards the Sangam and the other was returning from the Sangam. It would, thus, appear that the crowds, attracted by the somewhat unusual spectacle of two splendid processions being present at one and the same time in front of them, came to a standstill and thus obstructed the free flow of the traffic.

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## V—CRITICISMS AND SUGGESTIONS

### (a) *Preliminary.*

There is a time-worn saying that it is easy to be wise after the event. I, personally, have always objected to the sarcasm involved in it. In fact, I feel that this adage should be included in the list of the proverbs which are classed as Pernicious Proverbs. It seems to me that, as a matter of fact, there is no dearth of those who do not find it easy to be wise even after the event. What is wrong in being wise after the event? Since the beginning of creation man has always learnt by experience, bitter experience, and that is how he has made progress. It would be extremely foolish not to be wise after the event. There is, as far as I can see, no justification for speaking with a sneer of those who profit by experience. It is, in my opinion, the duty of every citizen of our country to assist Government in finding out the causes that led to this tragedy and in devising such plans as may be feasible to prevent such mishaps in future.

I should like to say at the outset that, if we do not find it possible to endorse every criticism that has been offered on behalf of the public, it does not mean that we do not deeply appreciate the ready response on the part of the public to the request of the Committee for co-operation. I am sure my learned colleagues agree with me when I say that we are very grateful to all those who have taken the trouble of sending notes and written statements and of appearing before us. While it is true that quite a number of witnesses have indulged in exaggerations and have relied on rumour and hearsay, on their prejudices and pre-conceived notions, and even on their imagination, it must not be forgotten that this may, to a certain extent, be due to the fact that many people find it difficult to distinguish between hearsay and personal knowledge. There is also the fact that feelings have been deeply stirred by this tragedy. Furthermore, so far as criticisms on behalf of the public

are concerned, one must bear in mind a not uncommon trait of human nature. Whenever a sudden catastrophe occurs, human beings begin at once to look for a scapegoat, and what better scapegoat can there be than the Government, whatever its complexion and composition? It is always there to be blamed. There is, however, one distressing feature in the matter before us. There has been noticeable—and on the part of persons from whom one expects a better standard—a tendency to step outside the bounds of responsible, balanced and fair criticism and to go to lengths which are clearly improper. Such instances, happily, are very few.

Similarly, the fact that we do not agree with all that has been said by or on behalf of the officials, who were responsible for the arrangements in the mela, does not mean that we do not realise the difficulties that they had to contend against or that we are not conscious of the splendid effort that they put forth. It was a race against time. Really, serious work could not, for various reasons, be started before the third or fourth week of October, 1953. I have a feeling that it was only after, and possibly as a result of, the Prime Minister's visit to the mela area on the 20th October, 1953, that the urgency of the situation was fully realised by all concerned. What Sri J. N. Ugra and his colleagues achieved during the short time at their disposal before the 14th of January, 1954, when the mela was to start, deserves admiration. Their ambition appears to have been to make this year's mela a splendid affair and, in order to realise their ambition, they worked day and night. They were animated by the feeling that the 1954 mela being the first big Kumbha at Prayaga after independence, it should be made a grand success. That there were on their part mistakes, errors of judgment and lack of foresight in certain matters, is, I think, undeniable. But, when things have to be rushed through in an attempt to make up for lost time, and work is done at high pressure, mistakes and errors of judgment are often inevitable. There is no time for calm, cool and critical judgment. There is feverish activity and the one anxiety is to get things done by a certain date. I am satisfied that, at any rate, so far as the officers at the top were concerned, there was no gross negligence or conscious dereliction of duty.

In considering the statements made by the officials, too, one must bear in mind a certain element of human nature. Those who are engaged in the task of administration are prone to stick tenaciously to

their views and are seldom willing to admit that they might have made a mistake. That this is so is also, perhaps, inevitable. With the possible exception of Sri J. P. Tripathi—who has agreed in the case of some of the suggestions made that planning on those lines would have been better but has contended that, for certain reasons given by him, it was not possible to do so this year—all the official witnesses have maintained that their planning and arrangements were perfectly sound and that the tragedy was caused by an accident. They forget, however, that all accidents are traceable to some mistake, some lack of judgment, some omission to bear in mind a Safety First rule. By lighting a cigarette, forgetting that petrol vapour is likely to be present in the atmosphere of the place, one can bring about a mighty and devastating conflagration. At the same time, I realise that, in the case of certain types of accidents, it would be unreasonable to expect the exercise of the foresight the want of which is found to have been responsible for the accident.

I should like to mention here a certain point on which the mela officials are entitled to rely. It has been stated by Pandit Kanahiya Lal Misra that, before the mela started on the 14th January, 1954, he had been present at one or two meetings where the mela arrangements were being discussed by the officials and that he found that there were two dangers to human life which the officials had prominently in their mind. One was the fear of an epidemic of cholera breaking out and the other was the danger of deaths by drowning, particularly in the Sangam. He has deposed that nobody ever mentioned during the discussions at these meetings any possible danger of any kind on the ramps or in the area below the Bandh to the east. I may add that, to the best of my knowledge, no untoward incident has ever happened on any of these ramps in any previous mela. There was thus no precedent of such a mishap before the officials. The result was that they concentrated on the two matters mentioned above—the danger of cholera and the danger of drowning—and succeeded admirably in their efforts. The third danger that they must have had in mind was the possibility of a riot among the Sadhus, and the officials succeeded in preventing that also. People have now come forward and said that they had realised before the 3rd February that the planning was defective. Some have even gone to the length of saying that they knew that such a mishap was inevitable. The obvious answer to this kind of assertion is : “ Why did you not go and

“speak to Sri J. N. Ugra or Sri J. P. Tripathi ?”. Some of them have shown a tendency to suggest that the officials were not prepared to listen to any one and to accept any suggestions. I am satisfied that this allegation is not well-founded. The mela authorities had often invited suggestions and criticisms from the members of the public, as the Press Notes issued by the mela office will show. In one of them Sri J. N. Ugra had said : “ May I add that I shall be grateful for any suggestions sent to me and would request that the cover may be addressed to me by name ” Many of the Press Notes, including this one, were published in the local newspapers. In any case, if the officials were not prepared to listen to any one, why did no one write in the newspapers ? If anybody had really foreseen such a mishap or anything like it, one would have expected an immediate outcry in the press. Then, again, why did nobody approach the higher authorities and inform them that the mela officials were so foolish as not to listen to any advice on such an important point ? It is not unknown that people are in the habit of approaching higher authorities, even with deputations, for various purposes. Here was a matter of vital importance, in which a question of life and death on a large scale was involved, and yet nobody did anything tangible. The conclusion is irresistible that nobody had any clear realisation of an apprehension that the planning of the mela and the traffic rules were so defective that a dangerous situation was likely to arise in the locality in question.

सत्यमेव जयते

(b) *Certain invalid criticisms.*

(1) It has been alleged by a number of people that one of the important circumstances responsible for the tragedy was the presence in the mela of certain persons whom they describe as “ V.I.P.s. ”. These letters of the alphabet, I am told, stand for the words “Very Important Persons”. I do not know when and how this expression came into vogue. Perhaps it is one of those phrases which became current during the last war. Be that as it may, we have had to hear a good deal about it during this enquiry. The facts on which the criticism on the score of the presence in the mela of “ V.I.P.s. ” is based are these. The mela authorities put up two camps for certain classes of visitors. One of them was situated in the Jhusi Sector, i.e. in the area lying to the east of the Ganga and the other one was in the Parade area, a little to the west of Jawaharlal Nehru Road. Both of them were

described in the official records as Visitors' Camps. The idea was that visitors like Governors, Chief Ministers, Ministers, etc., who needed accommodation, should be put up in the former and foreign visitors in the latter. There was no signboard describing either of these two camps as the V. I. P. Camp. It appears, however, that two circumstances led the public to describe the Jhusi side Visitors' Camp as the V. I. P. Camp. One was that a post office situated in the vicinity of that camp chose to describe itself as "V. I. P. Camp Post Office," or in words to that effect. The other was that various mela officials found it convenient to describe it as the V. I. P. Camp, possibly with the object of distinguishing it from the other Visitors' Camp. The result was that this unfortunate expression gained currency and began to be used in common parlance. The contention on behalf of the critics is that the mela officials were busy in looking after the V. I. P.s and so neglected the interests of the public attending the mela. It is further suggested that a substantial portion of the mela police was diverted from its legitimate duties to duties connected with the presence of the V. I. P.s. and consequently adequate police force was not available for controlling the pedestrian traffic in the mela area on the 3rd of February, 1954. It is perfectly clear, however, that these allegations are without foundation. The facts that have been established are these. The President, the Prime Minister, the Governor and the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh did not stay in the mela area at all. The Prime Minister was staying in his own house, 'Anand Bhavan'. The President, the Governor and the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh stayed at Raj Bhavan. The Governor of the Punjab and the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh had also come and were guests of the Uttar Pradesh Governor at Raj Bhavan. It may be mentioned that 'Anand Bhavan' and Raj Bhavan are situated outside, and at some distance from, the mela area. Whatever police arrangements were required at 'Anand Bhavan' and at Raj Bhavan, or in connection with the visits to the Sangam of the inmates of those houses, were made by the Senior Superintendent of Police of the district of Allahabad, and the mela police had nothing to do with these arrangements. The relevant portion of the evidence of Sri S. K. Anand, Senior Superintendent of Police of the district of Allahabad, is as follows — "On the Amavasya (3rd February) the President, the Prime Minister, the Governor, U. P., the Governor of the Punjab, all went by boats to the Sangam.

The President and the U. P. Governor went together and the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh was also in their party. We piloted and escorted them throughout, i. e. on the outward journey up to the Sangam as well as on the return journey. The Prime Minister had gone separately by boat on the morning of the 3rd February and he had also been piloted and escorted by the District Police Force and the U. P. Inspector General of Police had gone with him. The Governor of the Punjab went to the Sangam in the afternoon of the 3rd February. He also had gone by boat. My police force had piloted and escorted him throughout the trip." They had all gone by car to Lorwa Ghat (which is also known as *pucca* ghat) on the Jamuna Bank Road, *vide* map marked II. From that place they went by boat down the Yamuna to the Sangam. It is, further, clear on the evidence that the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh also went from Raj Bhavan to Lorwa (*pucca*) Ghat and thereafter he and his party went to the Sangam by boat and came back to Raj Bhavan in the same manner and by the same route as had been adopted on the outward journey. The following statement of Sri S. K. Anand may also be quoted: "Whatever police duties had to be performed outside the mela area and within the district of Allahabad were performed by the district police, i. e. the police force of which I was the head."

It is also established beyond doubt that no mela official had anything to do with any of these distinguished visitors on the 3rd February at any time relevant to the enquiry.

I am, further, satisfied that on the 3rd February no mela official had to devote time or attention in any manner to any Ministers or Deputy Ministers, etc. who might have been staying in the Visitors' Camp on the Jhusi side. All the allegations in this connection are baseless. Some people have gone to the length of saying that some road or bridge was reserved for Ministers and that their cars were passing along that bridge or road on the 3rd February. This is wholly without foundation and is based on pure imagination.

It is thus clear that criticisms on this score are entirely unjustified. It seems to me that the use of the expression "V. I. P." had produced an irritation in the minds of certain people and, as soon as they heard

that a mishap had occurred, they jumped to the conclusion that the visit of these personages must, somehow or other, be at least one of the causes which brought it about. It is also probable that, at least in the case of certain persons, an ulterior motive also became operative and they spread the rumour that the visit of the V. I. P.s was responsible for the mishap. As an example of the influence that these rumours had on the minds of the people, it may be mentioned here that one of those who had raised this point in their written statements was Mahant Sri Kishore Das Ji of the Bara Panchayati Akhara. When he appeared before the Committee for oral examination, he was questioned on the subject and he frankly admitted that what he had stated in the written statement was based on what he had heard from other people and that he had no personal knowledge of any facts connected with the 'V. I. P. Camp' or the activities of those who were considered to be V. I. P.s on the Amāvasya day. The only criticism which, in my opinion, can be justly levelled against the mela officials in regard to this matter is that they allowed the use of, and even used themselves, the expression 'V. I. P.'

(2) Another criticism which has been made, and which too in my opinion is not well founded, is this. It has been said that the Government carried on propaganda with the object of attracting pilgrims to this year's Kumbha and that that propaganda was responsible for such an unprecedented assemblage. There is nothing before us which can be relied upon in support of this allegation. This criticism too is a product of prejudice and pre-conceived notions. The Government and its officers *had* to be blamed and arguments had to be found. Unfortunately, many people did not pause and consider whether the arguments advanced by them were based on facts. They were angry with the Government and its local representatives and in their anger allowed reason to be overwhelmed by passion. To illustrate the point, I shall quote certain passages from the statement of Dr. S. P. Naithani, Reader in the Botany Department of the Allahabad University and President of the University Social Service League. They are as follows :—

“ *Question*—Will you kindly explain what exactly you mean by the third sentence of the fifth paragraph of your written statement which is as follows ?

‘ It was obvious that the widest possible publicity deliberately given by the Government to the Kumbha Mela had played



excellently upon the religious sentiments of the people and that they were pouring in for the 'Holy Dip' while expecting the very best and the most comfortable arrangements for their stay in the Kumbha City.'

Will you please give some examples of those actions of the Government which, according to you, amounted to giving publicity to the Kumbha Mela ?

*Answer*—What I mean by the Government is not only the Ministers but the whole machinery. I do feel that the Government machinery did play an important part in giving publicity to the Kumbha Mela, but I am unable to give any specific instances.

*Question*—What exactly do you mean by 'giving publicity to the Kumbha Mela' ?

*Answer*—What I mean to say is that we cannot deny the fact that the press, the public and the Government machinery did give publicity to the importance of this Kumbha Mela.

*Question*—Is it your assertion, that but for what, according to you, Government and its machinery did, the people of this country would not have realised the importance of this year's Kumbha and would not have come in large numbers to bathe ?

*Answer*—I was here in 1942 and I noticed that on account of the restrictions placed by the then Government on travelling the crowd was not large.

*Question*—Do you say that it was the duty of the Government to place restrictions upon intending pilgrims and to deny them transport facilities with the object of preventing them from coming to this year's Kumbh ?

*Answer*—I have already explained my meaning and I have nothing further to add in this connection. There are certain things which one feels but of which one is not able to give concrete examples. I have felt like that and that is why I wrote that sentence."

It will be noticed that, in the answer to the second question above, Dr. Naithani puts "the press, the public and the Government machinery" together. It is difficult to understand why the Government should be blamed for anything done by the press and the public. I have dealt at some length with the origin and gradual development through the centuries of the Kumbha bathing festival — Kumbha

Snana—with the object of showing that the followers of Hindu Sanatana Dharma come on pilgrimage to Prayaga and bathe in the Sangam on the occasions of Kumbha Maháparva because of an irresistible inner urge and an undying faith. The fundamental fact which these critics forget is that no propaganda is needed to induce such people to come.

It is instructive to note what happened in the Kumbhs of 1918 and 1942. It will be recalled that the 1918 Kumbha fell in the middle of the First World War and that the 1942 Kumbha occurred when the Second World War was at its worst.

Taking the 1918 Kumbha first, it is stated in the District Magistrate's report, dated the 20th May, 1918, that it was anticipated originally that pilgrims would come in unusually large numbers, "especially as the tendency in recent years had been towards a marked increase in the visitors at the ordinary Magh Mela". The report goes on to say that, as the time for the mela approached, the pressure on the railways for the carriage of goods and material required for war purposes increased and it became clear that the usual facilities could not be provided for pilgrim traffic. The result was that the East Indian Railway was compelled early in October, 1917 to publish a notification that special trains would not be run in connection with the mela. Subsequently, the Government of India, in a notification issued on the 21st December, 1917, prohibited the booking of pilgrims to Allahabad or any station within a certain distance from it between the 3rd January and the 25th February, 1918. It is then stated in the report:—"Speculation was rife as to the effect of the prohibition on travelling, but the people largely solved the difficulty by travelling by road and, to some extent by river. The attendance on the Shankrant (14th January) was normal for a Kumbh Mela and at the Amawas was probably larger than on any previous occasion." The estimate given in the report of the number of people who came to bathe on the Amavasya day is that it was between two and three millions.

Coming now to the 1942 Kumbha, it need hardly be stated that the impact of the Second World War on our country was immeasurably greater than that of the First World War. It is stated in the report of Mr. Ruse, the Officer-in-charge of the mela, which was forwarded to Government by the District Magistrate, that it was originally anticipated that the gathering in 1942 would be somewhat larger than

that of the 1930 Kumbha on the general ground that, owing to increased transport facilities and improved utility services, the number of pilgrims at ordinary melas had been on the increase during the past few years, and it was conjectured that the gathering on Amavasya, the main day, might reach the neighbourhood of four or five millions as against the recorded estimate of three and a half millions for 1930. The report then proceeds: "The event, however, proved far otherwise, owing partly to effective anti-Mela propaganda (due to shortage of rolling stock on account of War demands) issued by the various Railway Administrations from the last week of November, 1941 onwards, but mainly to a definitive restriction placed on mela traffic by a Government of India Ordinance promulgated on the 23rd December, 1941, directly as a result of the entry of Japan into the war. This Ordinance placed a ban on the issuing of tickets to intending pilgrims for a wide radius round Allahabad for one month beginning from the 4th January, 1942. These two factors, together with the decision of the U. P. Government not to grant extra rations of petrol to lorries plying to and from Allahabad and a general feeling of nervousness created by the proximity of the mela area to the Allahabad Fort and consequent possibility of aerial attack by Japan, had the effect of reducing the originally anticipated number very considerably. (It may be remarked, incidentally, that this fear of aerial attack, though not seriously entertained in Military circles, was very real amongst the population of Allahabad generally, and by no means confined to those classes generally termed illiterate or semi-literate). Unusually bad weather both on and near Amavash, the like of which I am credibly informed had not been seen during the month of Magh within living memory, was responsible for a further considerable reduction in the gathering". Thus, five different potent factors were operating to prevent people from coming, and yet the attendance on the Amavasya day was twelve lakhs.

Nothing done by the State Government, the Central Government or the mela officials in connection with the 1954 Kumbha, which can justly be said to amount to propaganda, has been brought to our notice. Although there is no evidence before us, I am prepared to assume for the sake of argument that the railways did publish something which can be said to be in the nature of advertisements. That, however, cannot be a matter for complaint. Railways, whether they are owned by companies or by the State, are, after all, commercial

concerns and, as such, it is their business to advertise. All that they could have said in their advertisements was that they would be running special trains in connection with the Kumbha Mela to meet the demands of the travelling public. Railways publish various kinds of advertisements during the year, e.g. notices announcing cheap return tickets to the hill resorts.

As for the mela officials, it is true that from time to time they put out for publication in the Press what are called "hand-outs" about the Kumbha Mela, but it was obviously their duty to keep the public informed of the difficulties that they were facing and the steps that they were taking for the convenience of the public. If they had not given this information, they would have failed in their duty.

The fact of the matter appears to be that the public throughout the country became aware through various sources—not governmental—that this year's Kumbha was of special significance. They further felt that this was the first Kumbha after independence. There was also the fact that, because of the restrictions placed upon travelling and the other causes mentioned above, large numbers had not been able to attend the 1942 Kumbha. They felt that, for all practical purposes, this was the first Kumbha after 1930 and many people must have felt that they might not live for another twelve years. The desire to attend this year's Kumbha, therefore, became overpowering. There is also the fact that economic conditions in the rural areas have during recent times improved considerably.

(3) A third criticism, which has been made by some of those who have sent written statements or have appeared before the Committee, may be examined here. It is to the effect that at the time of the mishap the police charged the crowd with batons or lathis. This appears to be based on a misapprehension. Some of those who were injured in the mishap were found to be suffering from injuries which appeared to have been inflicted with a lathi or a baton and it was presumed by some people that these injuries must have been caused by the police. It is established by the evidence before us, however, that the police never charged the crowd with batons or lathis. There are definite rules as to when the police can use force, and charging a crowd with batons or lathis is within the meaning of "force". An order has to be given by a superior officer, and no such order was given on the occasion in question. As a matter of fact, the

policemen on duty in that area do not appear to have had any lathis or batons with them. What seems to have happened is this. As is well known, villagers generally carry a lathi or a *danda* of some sort whenever they go out. Many of them use it for carrying their bundles slung over their shoulders by means of it. Thus, many of the pilgrims who were in the locality in question had a lathi or a *danda*. When the stampede began and people rushed in all directions to escape the crush, those who were in danger of being thrown down in consequence of the sudden onslaught and trampled upon plied their lathis or *dandas* to save themselves. Thus a number of people received lathi or *danda* injuries. The statements of Sri Narain Datt Pandey and Sri D. C. Bhattacharya, which I have already quoted, show this. For the sake of convenience, the sentences in question may be reproduced here. Sri Narain Datt Pandey has stated: "The crowd became panic-stricken and began to run helter-skelter in all directions for safety. Many villagers who had lathis began to attack the fleeing crowd with their lathis in order to save themselves and several pilgrims received injuries". The relevant portion of Sri D. C. Bhattacharya's statement is as follows: "In the direction of the trenches to the north of the ramp some persons were laying sticks forcibly on the crowd". Through the courtesy of the Education Expansion Board, U. P., Film Section, we visited the Chal Chitra Kendra here and saw on the screen the films taken on the morning of the 3rd February by their men. Their van was stationed at a point near the junction of Gangapatti (Vairagi Akhára Return) Road with the outgoing Akhára Procession Route, i.e. Sangam Road, and commanded a view of that section of the Sangam area. These films made it clear that many of the pilgrims were freely using their lathis or *dandas* to save themselves from the rushing crowds. At our request the Chal Chitra Kendra have prepared still photographs of some of the films. They are twenty in number and are annexed to this Report. The movement of the sticks can be seen on the screen and not in the photographs. The photographs, however, show that many of the pilgrims had lathis or *dandas* in their hands and were holding them in the manner in which a person who wants to use a lathi or *danda* holds it. A short note dealing with some other points in connection with these photographs will be found in Appendix B. Those points are not relevant to the matter with which I am dealing here and so the note is put in an appendix.

The idea that the police charged the crowd with lathis or batons is, therefore, incorrect.

(4) Fourthly, a sort of a nebulous idea seemed to prevail amongst certain people that the authorities, when they noticed that the number of the pilgrims who had already arrived had reached the maximum that could be properly controlled and managed in the mela area, should have prevented more pilgrims from coming to Allahabad. In my opinion, any such action on the part of the authorities not only is impracticable but would also be improper. How are the authorities to know the exact time when it would be proper to prevent any further pilgrims from coming in? How can the authorities prevent people from travelling to Allahabad? Pilgrims keep pouring in from all directions and in all sorts of ways — by trains, motor vehicles (not only buses and taxis plying for hire but also private cars), horse-drawn vehicles of all sorts, bicycles, bullock-carts, boats and, last but not least, on foot. This year people also came by air. How are the authorities to stop all these people at the exact time? Are those who have already left their homes—many of them distant—to be stranded on the way? The utmost that the Government can do is to cancel all special trains and State-owned planes and buses. That clearly would not be of much avail. The suggestion that the authorities should have taken any such action is, to my mind, an impossible one.

As for its impropriety, how I look upon the matter is this. Human beings in all ages and in all climes have been, and are, impelled by religious fervour to undertake pilgrimages. As I have said above, our people come to these bathing festivals because of an inner urge and a firm faith. Hundreds of thousands of people have been coming to Prayāga to bathe in the Sangam for thousands of years from all over India. There is something sublime about the faith which moves people to go to these bathing festivals. Then, gatherings of this nature, as I have already pointed out, are an integral part of our ancient culture. Any interference with them is likely to injure a valuable strand in the texture of that culture. Furthermore — apart from the religious side of it — millions of people, when they decide to come to these gatherings, are imbued with a spirit which may truly be described as the spirit to do or die. They know the hardships, the privations and the dangers that lie ahead, and yet they undertake the journey. Such a spirit is a valuable asset in the national character of a people.

Not only should this spirit not be interfered with but it should be encouraged and directed into fruitful channels in the service of the country.

(5) Lastly, Pandit Shiv Charan Lal, among other things, emphatically expressed the opinion that the mela officials made a mistake in not constructing, for that part of the crowd which returned from the Sangam after bathing and was bound for places to the east of the Ganga, an overbridge from the bottom of Ramp no. 1 to the western end of bridge no. 3. Both Sri K. N. Misra, Town Planner, and Col. Ruthnaswamy, Military Engineer, were questioned on this subject and they said that it was an impossible proposition. Sri K. N. Misra gave a number of reasons which, in my opinion, are perfectly sound. Among other things, he pointed out that the construction of such an overbridge would have itself created bottlenecks because the bridge would have had to be supported on pillars and these pillars would have been an obstruction to the traffic on the ground and that the bridge could not have been made of one span. He, further, stated that the cost of constructing such a bridge would have been enormous and that the time required for building it would have been much more than the time that was available. Col. Ruthnaswamy stated that it was a fantastic idea beyond his comprehension and was technically unsound. He also gave reasons of the same type as those given by Sri K. N. Misra with greater details as to dimensions, etc. Pandit Shiv Charan Lal had been questioned as to whether he had studied engineering and had any knowledge of that subject. In reply he stated as follows : "I have never studied engineering and I have no knowledge of any branch of that subject." He also admitted that he had never had any occasion to plan the lay-out of any mela. He stated, however, that he had had occasion to plan the lay-out of the sites of Provincial Political Conferences. It appears to me, however, that any knowledge or experience that he might have acquired by planning the lay-out of the sites of conferences cannot qualify him for expressing authoritative opinions on such matters as the construction of overbridges. My conclusion is that the suggestion made by him is unsound and impracticable.

*(c) Other criticisms and suggestions*

I now come to such criticisms as appear to me to be valid. Some of these points have already been indicated. The suggestions which

flow from these criticisms are obvious. These suggestions will apply mainly to the occasions when the conditions are similar to those prevailing at the time of the 1954 Kumbha.

DELAY—The matter to which I wish to draw attention first is the delay that occurred in the commencement of the preparations for the mela. As I have indicated above, this was due to various causes. I have no doubt that the State Government did not know, until sometime after Sri Ugra had begun to give serious attention to the mela work in September 1953, that this Kumbha was going to be a special Kumbha. But, even taking it to be an ordinary twelve-yearly Kumbha, the preparations should have been started much earlier. It was, further, unfortunate that practically all the principal administrative officers of the district of Allahabad were changed in the middle of the year 1953. As has already been mentioned, Sri H. C. Gupta, who was the District Magistrate before Sri J. N. Ugra, went away on leave on the 23rd May, 1953, after making over charge to his Additional District Magistrate, Sri B. D. Seth. All that he had done up to that time was to submit to Government the mela budget and to hold a meeting of the Mela Committee on the 21st May, 1953. While he was on leave he received orders to proceed to New Delhi and Sri B. D. Seth, the Additional District Magistrate, continued to hold charge of the district. Sri J. N. Ugra arrived here on the 14th July, 1953. Two days earlier a change had taken place in another important office, namely that of the Senior Superintendent of Police, Sri S. K. Anand having taken over charge of that office on the 12th July, 1953. For obvious reasons, Sri Ugra had to devote his attention during the next seven or eight weeks almost exclusively to the task of gathering the reins of the administration of the district and it was not until sometime in the first week of September that he was able to turn his attention to the impending Kumbha Mela. He soon realised that things were getting late and pressed for the early appointment of an Officer-in-charge. It may be noted here that about that time there was yet another change as Sri B. D. Seth left the district and Sri R. B. Saxena took his place as Additional District Magistrate on the 9th September, 1953. Sri A. S. Baghel was appointed Officer-in-charge, Kumbha Mela, and he arrived here on the 22nd September, 1953, but a few days later went back to Meerut to deliver judgment in some case. The result was that he was able to attend to the mela work only sometime in the first week of October, 1953.



By that time, evidently, Sri J. N. Ugra had come to feel that the situation demanded prompt action and had taken the entire work in his own hands. Nature also had been unkind and there had been unusually heavy rain in August bringing about heavy floods in the Ganga. Furthermore, the Ganga was showing no sign yet of settling down in a definite channel. Sri Ugra apparently began to make efforts to secure help from all directions. Then came the Prime Minister's visit on the 20th October, 1953. Ultimately the assistance of the Defence Department became available. The various departments of the State Government also became more alert and the planning of the mela was taken seriously in hand. Sri J. P. Tripathi, the officer selected to be the Senior Superintendent of Police in the mela, arrived on the 9th November, 1953. So did Sri B. R. Gupta who was posted as the Additional Officer-in-Charge. Sri Baghel spoke over the telephone to the State Town and Village Planner, Sri K. N. Misra, sometime in October and requested him to prepare a plan for the mela. A little later, the Secretary to Government, Uttar Pradesh, in the Local Self-Government Department, Sri K. N. Singh, came to Allahabad on a tour of inspection and he then wrote a demi-official letter to Sri K. N. Misra instructing him to proceed to Allahabad immediately and to take in hand the work of planning the Kumbha Mela. Sri K. N. Misra states that he arrived on the 10th or the 11th of November. Col. Ruthnaswamy arrived on the 13th November, 1953. These two engineers, naturally, took some days to prepare the plans for their respective branches of work. Thus, real serious practical work of construction and actual lay-out of the mela site could not commence before the third or the fourth week of November, 1953.

The result was tremendous hustle, feverish activity and an overpowering anxiety to get ready somehow or other by the 14th January, 1954. There was no time for calm and clear thinking and for paying attention to details. It appears to me that it is necessary to bear this aspect of the matter in mind when appraising the work of the mela officials. Several witnesses have raised this point of delay, but it will be sufficient to reproduce a few sentences from the statement of Mahant Sri Kishore Das Ji. In his written statement he had said:—"The officials worked very hard, but the insufficiency of time and necessary materials did not allow them to complete their arrangements in time."

In his deposition before the Committee he put the matter thus :  
 " As I have already indicated, the arrangements for the mela were started rather late . . . the organisation of the mela and the execution of the various schemes in connection therewith should be taken in hand much earlier than they were this year and should be completed in all their details at least one fortnight before the date of the commencement of the mela. As the organisation and the arrangements for this year's Kumbh started very late, the officials worked day and night and yet were not able to do everything fully and properly. The time at their disposal was so short that they had to rush everything and were not able to think over many details calmly and quietly ".

I must digress a little and say that my one serious criticism against Sri J. N. Ugra is that he took too much on his own shoulders. The function of the District Magistrate should be only supervisory. He should guide, direct and supervise, but he must not himself become the executive head of the mela. It is the Officer-in-Charge who should, not only in theory, but in fact, be the executive head of the mela and should be made to feel that he is responsible for everything that happens in the mela. The District Magistrate should see to it that the Officer-in-Charge performs his duties efficiently and properly and, if he feels that there is ground for serious dissatisfaction, it is his duty, in public interest, to request Government that another Officer-in-Charge be deputed. If the District Magistrate does everything himself, the Officer-in-Charge loses all initiative and sense of responsibility. As far as I can see, that is what happened to Sri A. S. Baghel in the present instance. The other thing that happened was that Sri J. N. Ugra not only damaged his health by overwork but got so immersed in the details of the mela work that he could not have that detached outlook which it is essential for the man at the top to possess.

To make matters worse, Sri A. S. Baghel fell ill on the 12th November, 1953, when, in his own words he " got an acute attack of renal colic ". He had probably been neglecting his health for some time past, for renal colic is a disease which is generally brought about by leading an unhealthy life over a period of time and not one which is contracted in consequence of a sudden infection like cholera or pneumonia. Be that as it may, he has stated that the attack lasted for four or five days but it left him very weak and his health remained

at a low ebb thereafter. In my opinion, when he found that he had become very weak and that his health was at a low ebb, he should have immediately applied for leave. I am, further, of opinion that Sri J. N. Ugra should have requested Government to let Sri Baghel go on leave. He need not have hesitated on the ground that Government would not like his asking for the appointment of a new Officer-in-Charge at that stage, because Sri Babu Ram Gupta was already there and all that need have been done was to appoint him the Officer-in-Charge and to make it clear to him that he was solely responsible for the entire work. Of all the officers assembled at Allahabad at the time of the last Kumbha, Sri Babu Ram Gupta was the only officer who had previous experience not only of the district of Allahabad but also of the mela. He had worked as Assistant Manager of the Mágha Melas at Allahabad in the years 1939 and 1940, as Manager of the Mágha Mela in the year 1941 and as Manager of the Kumbha Mela in the year 1942. As matters stood, however, Sri Babu Ram Gupta remained in a subordinate position and, as far as I can see, never got out of the inferiority complex which was inherent in that position. Sri Baghel has stated that, although his health remained at a low ebb, he continued to work. His health, however, became still worse and at the end of December 1953, he got an attack of influenza. He aggravated matters by attending a mela police parade held on the 1st of January, 1954, and had to stay in bed for the next five or six days. He then did some outdoor inspection work a few days before the 14th January and remained in the mela on that day. The result was that he became so ill that the Civil Surgeon had to send him to hospital. He remained in hospital from the 17th to the 31st January. It was during this period that he had made the arrangement for a vehicular mobile wireless set to be kept near his room in the hospital which I have already mentioned. As he had completely lost his voice, he used to write out whatever he had to say and hand it over to the wireless operator. He has further stated that, although the Civil Surgeon wanted him to stay on at the hospital for some time longer, he insisted that he must go back to his camp in the mela area and left the hospital for his camp on the afternoon of the 31st January, 1954. It will thus be seen that Sri Baghel was clearly a very sick man and could not possibly have done justice to the position of Officer-in-Charge. It was, in my opinion, not right for Sri J. N. Ugra to try to solve the difficulty by taking the whole burden on himself.

Sri J. N. Ugra has tried to explain away the delay in the commencement of the arrangements and the organisation of the mela by saying that "no serious work could have been done before the end of the rainy season". This is not a convincing argument. In fact, Sri Ugra himself, when questioned further, was not prepared to say that, if Sri Baghel had been available to him earlier, it would have been of no advantage to him. He admitted :—"If he had been available earlier, it would have been advantageous both for him and for me. Many important questions of policy and organisation had been discussed and decided before Mr. Baghel's arrival." It seems to me that the entire work of planning should have been done before the end of the rainy season on the footing that the area of the land available between the Ganga and the Bandh would be small. The lay-out of the Parade area and even work on the construction of roads could have been started. As soon as the monsoon began to show signs of receding, the work could have been pushed on speedily.

My suggestions under this head are these. Government should start paying attention to the arrangements for a forthcoming Kumbha Mela well in time. For example the next Kumbha is expected to take place in January, 1966. All relevant departments of Government should, in my opinion, begin taking the necessary preliminary steps in connection with the Kumbha sometime towards the end of the first quarter or the beginning of the second quarter of the year 1964. If the District Magistrate of Allahabad at that time is an officer in whose ability the Government have complete confidence, he should be kept at Allahabad until the mela is over and the report and the accounts of the mela have been finalised. If Government consider it necessary to make a change, the new District Magistrate should be posted by about the middle of 1964 at the latest. The Officer-in-charge should be carefully selected and he too should be posted to Allahabad as Additional District Magistrate about the middle of 1964, or earlier. He should be told that he would have to undertake the entire responsibility of the forthcoming Kumbha Mela. He will thus have time to get acquainted with the district, with the town and with the problems of the mela. He will get first-hand experience of the Magha Mela which will be held in 1965. About June or July, 1965, the District Magistrate should start relieving this officer of his Magisterial work by distributing it among his other Magistrates and, by the beginning of August, the Additional District Magistrate should be entirely relieved of all

other work and should be enabled to devote himself exclusively to the planning and the organisation of the mela. If necessary, another officer might be appointed to officiate as Additional District Magistrate for the next six or seven months. Sometime after the conclusion of the mela, the Officer-in-Charge can come back to his original post of Additional District Magistrate. He must, however, complete his report on the mela and have the entire accounts finalised and audited at the latest by the end of June, 1966. In my opinion, he should not be moved to another district until he has completely wound up the mela work and he should be told that it is his duty to wind it up by the end of June, 1966. All the other officers who have to work in the mela should be selected by the beginning of July 1965 and ordered to proceed to Allahabad and to take up their duties at the latest by the end of August. The police force should be made available to the head of the mela police at the latest by the end of September 1965 so that there may be sufficient time for the officers to get acquainted with their men and to train them in the work of the mela. In the 1954 Kumbha police officers kept arriving up to a few days before the Sankranti, Sri Agha Mohiuddin Shah, the Additional Superintendent of Police, having arrived as late as the 10th January, 1954. It is hardly necessary to say that all the departments of Government should be directed to cooperate with the mela authorities without delay. If the assistance of the military department is considered necessary, the preliminary steps for obtaining such assistance should be taken by the beginning of September 1965. Lastly, the District Magistrate of Allahabad should, in my opinion, start consulting Pandits and astrologers as to the nature of the next Kumbha about two and a half years before it is due in the ordinary course. Taking again the example of the Kumbha which will be held after the 1954 Kumbha, the District Magistrate should start consulting these gentlemen some time about the middle of the year 1963 and should ascertain (i) whether the next Kumbha is due in 1966 or in 1965, and (ii) whether any special significance attaches to it. It appears from the Report of the 1942 Kumbha, to which reference has already been made, that there was at that time a 'Mela Pandit' whose name was Pandit Ram Raj Shastri. I do not know if the system of having a 'Mela Pandit' still continues. In my opinion, the District Magistrate of Allahabad should have a Mela Pandit. He must be well versed in astrological as well as religious matters. By consulting

him in the manner suggested above, the District Magistrate will be able to get timely warning even if the Kumbha is to be held after eleven years only. There had been considerable controversy as to whether the Kumbha preceding the 1954 Kumbha should take place in 1941 or 1942. The Mela Pandit had expressed the opinion that it should be observed in 1942 and the matter was then referred to an All-India Conference of Pandits and leaders of the Sanatana Dharma at Nagpur in March 1940. The Conference endorsed the opinion of the Mela Pandit. I should like to emphasise the fact that the District Magistrate of Allahabad had moved in the matter early in 1940, so that, if the Kumbha was to take place in 1941, he might have sufficient time to get ready for it. The same procedure should be adopted in future.

No one realises the preoccupations of the Government better than my learned colleagues and I do, but this work also has got to be done.

**CHOLERA INOCULATION**—The imposition of compulsory cholera inoculation was, as I have said above, a wise step and the order should not have been rescinded. I should like, in this connection, to invite the attention of both the State and the Central Governments to the Report of the Sub-Committee appointed in 1939 by the Central Advisory Board of Health to examine the possibility of introducing a system of compulsory inoculation of pilgrims against cholera. It is dated the 29th June, 1939, and is signed by Sarvasri, T. S. S. Rajan, M. D. D. Gilder, E. Cotter, C. M. Nicol, A. C. Chatterji and K. P. Mathur. It was printed by the Manager, Government of India Press, Simla, in 1940. It is, in my opinion, a valuable document. My own view is that Government should not only introduce a system of compulsory inoculation of pilgrims against cholera but should go a step further and consider the feasibility of making inoculation against cholera compulsory for all citizens of India in the same way as vaccination is. In other words, an attempt should be made to stamp out cholera from our country. Legislation on the lines of The Vaccination Act (XIII of 1880) will have to be undertaken. In fact, it will have to be a more comprehensive piece of legislation. At the same time, I realise that legislation alone will not be sufficient. A country-wide propaganda and education of the people will have to be undertaken, and public opinion will have to be enlisted in support of such inoculation. I am sure the people will, in course of time, realise its necessity. The history of vaccination, not only in this country

but in other countries as well, bears testimony to that fact. It is obvious, however, that the adoption of the suggestion made by me—even if it is not considered utopian and is adopted—will take time. It is necessary, therefore, to take immediate and effective steps for the introduction of a system of compulsory inoculation against cholera of pilgrims attending all fairs and other gatherings of a like nature. I must, however, point out that the manner in which compulsory inoculation was sought to be enforced on the occasion of the 1954 Prayaga Kumbha was far from satisfactory. The scheme was hurriedly drawn up and put into effect. Pilgrims, specially the poor and illiterate villagers, were subjected to great harassment at the railway booking offices and at the barriers which had been set up at Allahabad. The proper thing will be to establish a system under which the pilgrims can be inoculated at suitable centres in their own villages or towns before starting on the journey. This, again, will be no small undertaking. I believe, however, that if time, attention and energy are devoted to the matter, a suitable scheme can be devised. The prevention of cholera is necessary in the interest not only of the pilgrims but of the whole country. The inoculation certificates of those travelling by rail and by air can be inspected by the railway and the airport staff, but barriers round about the mela area, for the inspection of the inoculation certificates of those coming by road, will still be necessary. The location of these barriers should be carefully considered and circumspection should be exercised in the selection of the staff.

**PLANNING DEFECTIVE**—Having given my careful consideration to the whole matter, I have come to the conclusion that the planning of the mela and the traffic arrangements were defective. Even the most sober and responsible among the witnesses have expressed that opinion. For example, Sri S. N. Ghosh has stated that the traffic arrangements left much to be desired and Pandit Kanhaiya Lal Misra, after observing that the current of the Ganga must remain the most important and the most decisive factor in the situation, has said that human foresight, nevertheless, can undoubtedly do much to prevent such tragedies and has mentioned several defects in the planning and the traffic arrangements.

I shall presently deal with some of the more important points but, before doing so, wish to make one observation of a general nature. It appears to me that whatever defects there were in the planning and

the arrangements were caused mainly by two cardinal psychological factors. Firstly, although every one talked of a crowd numbering fifty to sixty lakhs, no one had the vision and the imagination to realise what the arrival within a short space of time of anything like such a crowd in the comparatively small areas immediately to the west and to the east of the Bandh, all intent on bathing in the Sangam within certain specified hours and getting away quickly after the bathing, would mean. Secondly, I feel that the mela authorities were over-anxious to please too many people, even at the sacrifice of the cardinal principles of traffic control. For example, the Kali Sarak was made the exit route, instead of being prescribed as the route for ingress, apparently because the shopkeepers on the Kali Sarak protested on the ground that pilgrims make purchases when they return after bathing.

I now proceed to point out what, in my opinion, were the salient defects in the planning and the traffic regulations.

(1) The Sangam Railway Station should not have been located where it was, and, at any rate, should not have occupied as much space as it did. It appears that, of all the Government Departments, the railway administration were the first to realise their responsibilities in the matter of the 1954 Kumbha. There is reason to believe that some of their officers first came to know that the 1954 Kumbha would be of special significance and that it was through them that the news gradually spread. Somewhat naturally, they began at an early stage to pay serious attention to the arrangements that they had to make. The result was that they took their decisions long before the mela organisation came into existence. Sri S. R. Bharatya, who is the Organising Secretary of All-India Sova Samiti and Bharat Scouts and Guides and is also a member of the Northern Railway Advisory Committee, has explained the decision of the railway authorities to push on with their arrangements without consulting the mela officials by saying that the appointment of an Officer-in-Charge was very late. He has stated that, in previous Allahabad Kumbhs, the Officer-in-Charge was appointed about eight months before the commencement of the mela and that the result of the delay in the appointment of the Officer-in-Charge for the 1954 Kumbha "was that the railways had to make their own arrangements without waiting for the advent of the Officer-in-Charge and without consulting the mela authorities". This apparently was the reason why the railway authorities took their



decisions and completed their plans without consulting the mela authorities, although I am not able to see why they could not consult the District Magistrate before the arrival of an Officer-in-Charge. Anyhow, what happened was that the station enclosure was brought much too close to the Bandh and occupied much more space than it should have. The mind of the railway authorities appears to have moved along narrow grooves and they only considered their own points of view and paid no attention to the difficulties that their decisions were likely to cause in the matter of traffic control. I feel that, if Sri Ugra had pressed his point even at that stage, the higher railway authorities might have agreed to have the station removed further west. It may be that, by the time that the mela authorities became fully alive to the difficulties that the location of the Sangam Station would create, it was too late for the railway officials to do anything. Sri Ugra's statement in this connection is as follows: "Speaking for myself, I was not unhappy about the location of the Sangam Railway Station or on account of the area of land occupied by that station, although one or two of my colleagues did not approve of the location of the station. For one thing, I realise that we could not do anything to remove the station further west, and I am not in the habit of fretting about things which cannot be changed." Having thus made it perfectly clear that the true position was that he was utterly helpless in the matter, Sri Ugra, somewhat inconsistently, went on to give reasons for the view that the location of the Sangam station was not, after all, so harmful and that, as a matter of fact, it was useful in certain ways. It is not necessary to repeat all the reasons given by him. Suffice it to say that, in my opinion, they are all unsound. For example, one of the reasons given by him is that, but for the location of the Sangam railway station at the place where it was this year, he would have found it almost impossible to persuade the Sadhus to have their camps on the Jhusi side of the river Ganga. In making this statement Sri Ugra is really only trying to console himself for something which makes him sad. That is human nature. The fact of the matter, however, is that, if he had been firm and had cited the precedent of the 1906 Kumbha, when all the Akharas had agreed to have their camps to the east of the Ganga, the Sadhus would have had to agree on this occasion also.

I cannot help feeling that Sri Ugra went a little too far in the policy of appeasement of the Sadhus which he had adopted from the very

beginning He himself says: "My own view from the beginning was that a Kumbh was not worth having if the Sadhus remained dissatisfied, because it was primarily their show.....I was throughout anxious to honour their demands as far as possible." I do not know what Sri Ugra means by saying that the Kumbha Mela was primarily the show of the Sadhus. The practice of bathing in holy rivers may have originally been started by Sadhus thousands of years ago, but it cannot be argued that even now they are the only people to be considered on the occasions of these bathing festivals. For one thing, there would be no mela if millions of ordinary pilgrims did not come. The safety of millions of people cannot be jeopardised in order to keep some obstinate and unreasonable Sadhus satisfied. If the location of the Sangam station created a dangerous situation — as it undoubtedly did — it cannot be justified on the ground that it helped in the efforts to persuade the Sadhus to pitch their camps on the eastern bank of the Ganga. Even Mahant Sri Kishore Das Ji has criticised this policy and has stated: "The whole month of November was wasted in the discussion as to whether the camps of the Akharas, including the Kalpabasis, in other words, whether the mela should be located to the east of the Ganga or in the Parade area to the west of the Bund".

My suggestions in this connection are these. To begin with, it appears to me that there is no reason now for having such a station in the mela area. It was in the year 1929 that the East Indian Railway, which by that time had come under the ownership of the State, thought for the first time of having a station in the mela area for the 1930 Kumbha because the metre-gauge (Bengal and North Western) railway was at that time owned by a company and the Railway Board felt that they would be at a disadvantage if no such station was established. The railways having all been nationalised, no question of competition arises any longer.

Sri Kripal Singh, who was the Divisional Superintendent of the Northern Railway at the time of the mela and was only recently transferred from Allahabad, was examined by us and he gave a reason for the establishment of such a station which requires consideration. He said that a special station on the occasions of such melas is necessary because the present building and premises of the Allahabad Junction Station are unable to cope with crowds of such dimensions. He stated, further, that there are no facilities for the expansion of the

Allahabad Junction Station as it is situated in a congested area. This is a proposition which cannot be accepted. Were the old stations of Nagpur, Patna, Lucknow and Kanpur situated in wildernesses when it was decided to erect new station buildings at those places and to enlarge the yards, etc. ? Are passengers to and from Allahabad to put up with this antiquated and out of date building of the junction station for all time to come because it is situated in a "congested area"? If, for any reason, it is not possible to expand it at the present site, the new building can be located at a convenient place further west or further east wherever sufficient land is available, but it is absolutely necessary to construct a new building. It had better be double storied. I realise the question of expense, but, in my opinion, the money should be found. At least the money spent every six years on the erection of the Sangam station will be saved. Even if Allahabad has no other claim, the fact that millions of people throng to Prayāga on the occasion of the Kumbha has got to be considered. The yards can be moved further west. In the construction of the new building emphasis should be on solidity and utility, and not on elegance and luxury. All necessary conveniences for all classes of passengers should, of course, be provided, but there should be no frills and decorations which cost money. Several booking offices and several exits for third class passengers should be provided both on the north and the south of the new building. All of them need not be kept open all the year round and need be opened only on the occasions of these fairs. Commodious waiting halls for third class passengers should be constructed. In short, the requirements of third class passengers, in particular, should be kept in mind. The advantage in bringing all the crowd, inward as well as outward, to the junction station will be that it will be able to spread itself over the various roads of the town and, so, dangerous congestions would be avoided.

In this connection, I must also suggest that as many of the numerous level crossings, in which Allahabad abounds, as possible should be eliminated by constructing overhead roadways, sufficiently wide to carry all vehicular and pedestrian traffic like the one that has recently been built to the east of the Patna Junction Station. At least two such overhead roadways, one on each side of the metre-gauge Allahabad City Station, over the level crossings on the Lowther Road and the Grand Trunk Road, should be constructed before the

next Kumbha and, if possible, before the Ardha Kumbha of 1960. The overhead railway bridge, along which the trains run, near the Electric Power House at Surajkund should be widened so that the width of the roadway down below may be at least double of what it is at present. Its present width causes congestion and creates difficulties and dangers.

(2) Even the open spaces which were available in the Parade area beyond the enclosures of the Sangam Station and the Military Depot were covered up by numerous camps and shops, etc. This was a mistake. The result was that the entire crowd coming from the main portion of the town had to pass through the one route available, viz. that section of Triveni Road which lies between Jawaharlal Nehru Road and the Bandh. I have already described the condition of the crowd on that road on the morning of the 3rd February. The officials have maintained that they were right in prescribing only one route for ingress into this area, the main reason given by them being that, if the crowd had been allowed to come on to the Bandh by more than one route, it would have been extremely difficult to guide and control the crowd on the Bandh and in the Sangam area. This is not, in my opinion, a sound argument. Of course, a larger police force than the force which was available in the 1954 Kumbha will be required, and it should be provided. In the circumstances that prevailed this year, vast crowds had to compress themselves into a single road with the result that people were subjected to intolerable pressure and suffocation. The entire crowd had only one objective, viz. the Sangam, and it would have reached the Bandh in a healthy state of mind and body if it had been brought along more than one road in the Parade area and would easily have been guided on to the routes provided for going to the Sangam. Under the traffic regulations framed by the mela authorities, an enormous crowd had to converge on to that part of the Bandh which lies opposite Triveni Road and then down to Ramp no. 1.

My suggestions under this head are these. The entire Parade area should be kept open. As I have already said, there should be no railway station in that area. If a station is required until the Junction Station is expanded, it should be located somewhere to the west of the Parade area, say, in the neighbourhood of the metre gauge Allahabad City Station. The military authorities should be persuaded

to remove their Salvage Depot, Stores, etc. There is no dearth of *maidans* in the cantonments. I notice in the map that there is an area of several acres lying to the north of Triveni Road in the Parade and shown as "Agriculture Department". My suggestion is that it be removed to some other place. Four roads, including Kali Sarak, all lying to the north of Triveni Road, should be provided for incoming crowds and four roads, including Triveni Road, should be provided for outgoing crowds. As a look at the map marked II will show, the correct procedure is to bring in the crowds by the roads lying in the northern portion of the Parade and to send them out by the roads in the southern portion of the Parade. The return routes will then be nearer to the Sangam and it will be easier to guide returning crowds on to them. The essential administrative offices, hospitals, etc. that may be required for the Parade area should be located to the north and to the south of the two sets of roads mentioned above. Properly constructed ramps should be provided on both sides of the Bandh in front of all these roads. It may not always be possible to provide eight roads in the Sangam area. In fact, it is quite possible that there may come a time when the Ganga may be flowing at the foot of the Bandh and no land may be available to the east of the Bandh at all. It is hardly necessary to say that the suggestions made herein will have to be modified in the light of the circumstances existing at the time of any particular mela. For example, if there is no land at all to the east of the Bandh and the confluence is just below the Fort, all the ingress and egress routes will have to be so provided as to make it easy and safe for the pilgrims to reach the Sangam from the Bandh. The Akhāras should, in that case, be asked not only to pitch their camps to the east of the Ganga but should also be made to go to the Sangam and to return therefrom to their camps by roads constructed to the east of the Ganga. The number and the location of pontoon bridges will also have to be determined in the light of the circumstances existing at the time.

Similarly, it was a mistake to cover up the entire Sangam area by all sorts of camps. Even "Rest Camps" — which was probably only an euphemistic designation — for certain voluntary organisations were provided in this area. All of them had their camps in other sections of the mela. It is curious to note that, according to the Khatauni of the Sangam sector, out of the six organisations which were allowed to put up such "Rest Camps", one — All India Agarwal Seva

Samiti — was allotted a total area of 24 biswas while the maximum allowed to those among the remaining five was 5 biswas and the minimum was 1 biswa 10 biswansis. Only those official camps which are absolutely necessary should be kept in this area and they should occupy the minimum of space. There should, of course, be the Baras of Pragwals and barbers. Only one shop, selling flowers, should be allowed.

(3) As the facts already stated show, the main cause of the tragedy in question was a clash between the Nagas and pilgrims because the pilgrims went across the Akhara procession route and this was resented by the Nagas. The opinion has been expressed by many of the witnesses appearing before us that the routes prescribed for the Akhara processions and the routes prescribed for the pedestrian traffic should be kept entirely separate so that no occasion for a clash may arise. Having carefully considered all that has been said by the official as well as the non-official witnesses, I have come to the conclusion that the opinion expressed by many of the non-official witnesses that the routes should be kept separate is correct. Sri J. P. Tripathi admitted that that would undoubtedly be a better arrangement than the arrangement made this year, but said that it was not possible because the Sadhus would not have agreed to it. It was then pointed out to him that the authorities did enforce such a rule on the Vasanta Panchami day (8th February, 1954) by prescribing the Gangapatti Road for the return of all the Akharas, Sanyasis as well as Vairagis. His reply was that they were able to do so because, in consequence of the tragedy on the 3rd February, the Sadhus were in a chastened mood and so were prepared to listen to reason. It was also pointed out to Sri Tripathi that in the 1906 Kumbha — when the land available between the Ganga and the Bandh was even smaller in area than the land available this year — all the processions, after they had finished bathing, were sent back to their camps on the eastern bank of the Ganga by means of a pontoon bridge constructed near the Sangam. Sri Tripathi replied that, during the British regime, the Sadhus obeyed orders more readily than they were prepared to do now. It seems to me, however, that the Sadhus will now be more reasonable and will obey all such orders as are necessary in public interest. My suggestion is that the planning in future should be such that the routes for the Akhara processions and the pedestrians do not intersect one another. In the circumstances that prevailed this year, the proper

thing was to prescribe Gangapatti Road for the return of all the processions. All the land lying to the west of Sangam Road would, in that case, have been available for pedestrian traffic.

Strong impregnable barriers should be constructed between the procession routes and the pedestrian routes. The Balli and rope barriers which were erected this year were not adequate.

I shall at this stage deal briefly with the history of these Akhāras. They are not ancient institutions, having come into existence within the last 400 or 500 years. This is how Mahant Sri Kishore Das Ji who, as stated above, is the head of an important Akhāra, gives the history of the Akharas :—

“The word ‘Akhāra’ in common parlance means the place where wrestling takes place. There came a time in the history of the Sadhu Sampradāyas when they found it necessary to develop their physical prowess in addition to their spiritual Sadhanas. This was due, firstly, to the fact that some of the Sampradayas fought among themselves, for example, the Vairagis and the Sanyasis, and secondly, to the fact that in the reign of some of the Moslem Kings attempts were made to stop the various bathing congregations and attacks were made on temples and places of worship. Thus the various Sampradāyas of Sadhus came to be known as Akharas.”

Lower down, he gives details of the paraphernalia used in these processions — richly caparisoned elephants, horses, motor cars, etc. etc. — and states :—

“All this pomp and show and paraphernalia began to be used since the time when Sadhu Sampradāyas had become fighters in order to protect themselves and their religion, as I have already stated. The result was that they began also to follow the practices of kings and military commanders and thus taking out of processions with pomp and show started. I agree that the object of bathing in the Sangam is to obtain spiritual benefit. Before the time that I have mentioned above, the Sadhus used to go to bathe on foot, but they always went in a body. The Sadhus of each separate Sampradāya used to go together in groups. The system of taking out elephants and horses, etc. and the pomp and display began in the circumstances mentioned above.”

It is also believed that Madhusudan Saraswati Ji of Banaras, possibly with the assistance of Birbal and Abdul Rahim Khankhana, the well-known Ministers of Emperor Akbar, and with the approval of the Emperor, had put the organisation of these Akharas on a proper footing.

Thus what happened was that, at a certain period of the history of our country, the Sadhus considered it necessary to organise themselves into militant groups with a certain object in view. That object disappeared with the advent of the British and the adoption by the ruling class of the policy of non-interference in religious matters. The result is that there is no occasion now for the Akharas to be what they were intended to be and these processions now are nothing but empty and meaningless imitations of regal pomp and military formation. As Mahant Sri Kishore Das Ji has stated, the object of coming to Prayāga on pilgrimage and of bathing in the Sangam is to obtain spiritual benefit and originally the Sadhus used to go to bathe on foot. With the object of emphasising the aspect of congregational worship, they used to go in groups, chanting *mantras* and singing *bhajans*. There is no reason why the Sadhus should not now go back to their original procedure.

My suggestions are these. On the one hand, the authorities should give up the policy of appeasement and of, so to say, pampering the Sadhus. Pampering is not good either for the pamperer or for the pampered. A sustained and earnest effort should be made to make the Sadhus see reason and behave in a manner which is in the interest of the people at large. No elephants, horses, camels, motor cars and other paraphernalia should be allowed. At the most, the Mahants and other leaders of each group can go in *tanjans* or palanquins or on *takhts* carried over the shoulders of men. Lastly, I am convinced that the time has come when the participation of naked men in these processions of Sadhus should be banned. The original idea underlying nakedness was that in the spiritual development of a Yogi a stage is reached when his renunciation is so complete that he does not require even the minimum of clothes. When that stage is achieved, the Yogi becomes Digambar. The sublimity of the ideal is obvious. A true Digambar, however, does not go about parading in a procession. He withdraws himself so completely from the world that it is difficult to find him. It is said that some of the naked men who join these



processions are men who ordinarily wear clothes but agree, on payment, to join the group of naked men in the processions. To make naked men participate in these processions is to debase a very high ideal.

On the other hand, I venture, in all humility, to make an appeal to the Sadhus themselves. Any one who purports to be a Sadhu should be, and should behave like, a Sadhu. Sadhu means perfect, excellent, good, virtuous, pious, righteous. Our scriptures—and the scriptures of all other religions—are full of descriptions of the characteristics of a Sadhu. Goswami Tulsi Das Ji, with his genius for expressing the essence of the scriptures in a few simple lines, has thus summed up the whole thing in two Chaupais in his Ramcharita Manas :

साधु चरित सुभ चरित कयासू । निरस विसद् गुनमय फल जासू ॥

जो सहि दुःख पर छिद्र दुरावा । बंदनोय जेहि जग जत पावा ॥

Growse, the famous Hindi scholar and translator of Ramcharita Manas, has rendered these Chaupais thus :

“(Sadhus are those) whose good deeds resemble the produce of the cotton-plant in its austerity, purity and manifold usefulness, and in its hiding the defects even of those by whom it has been most roughly treated.”

Another English translation of Ramcharita Manas, under the title “The Holy Lake of the Acts of Rama”, by Mr. W. Douglas P. Hill, at one time Principal of Jay Narayan’s School, Banaras, has recently been published by the Oxford University Press. Mr. Hill has translated these two Chaupais thus :

“The acts of a saint are good, like the acts of the cotton-plant, whose produce is dry and white and thread-like. Though he suffers ill-usage, he hides the faults of others, and thus is worthy of reverence and wins honour in the world”.

In a footnote on the words “*niras*, *visada* and *gunmaya*” Mr. Hill says : “The words have a double meaning which it is not possible to represent in translation. The saint is without *rasa*, i.e. emotional attachments; he is *visada*, i.e. without the darkness of ignorance and sin; *guna* has the meaning of thread for the cotton and goodness for the saint. The process of making cotton into cloth is regarded as rough treatment; yet the cloth returns good for evil by covering the body”. It is impossible to put the ideals of selflessness, of self-sacrifice, of service and of freedom from anger and hatred more

clearly and beautifully. My appeal to those who want to be treated as Sadhus is that they should pause and ponder and should consider how far they come up to this standard. Is beating, with iron Chintas, a poor exhausted pilgrim, who, pushed by relentless pressure from behind, is hurled across a roadway reserved for a procession of Sadhus, the act of a Sadhu? Is it right for a Sadhu only to insist on what he considers his rights, privileges and prerogatives, and to forget his duties?

Not to go back to ancient times when the Rishis — in other words, Sadhus — were preceptors, friends, philosophers and guides of the rest of humanity, several generations of Sadhus have even in comparatively recent times rendered most valuable services to the country. My earnest request to the present generation of Sadhus is that they should put their house in order and should go back to their original noble role. As matters stand at present, the word 'Sadhu' has ceased to have its real significance and has become synonymous with the word 'beggar'.

I suggest that the Sadhus should themselves give up all this pomp and show and should go to the Sangam on foot in the manner in which the Sadhus originally used to do. Did Yajnavalkya, Valmiki, Bhardwaj and Shankaracharya — to mention only a few — go to the Sangam on elephants? It appears to me that going to the Sangam in this manner is inconsistent with the reverence which is due to Triveni Sangam.

The description given by Mr. Lovett in his report on the 1906 Kumbha of a fight between the Nirvani Vairagis, on the one side, and the Digambar and Nirmohi Vairagis, on the other, which was prevented from assuming serious proportions only by the presence of cavalry sawars, who drew their swords, and for which nine of the ringleaders were arrested and punished for rioting, does not make pleasant reading.

(5) As has been stated above, a large number of beggars and pilgrims were occupying the open spaces in the Sangam area. There is reason to believe that a substantial proportion of the casualties belonged to this class. No beggars and squatters should be allowed to remain in this area. Ample and suitable free accommodation should be provided for those pilgrims who require it and satisfactory arrangements should be made for guiding them to it. Beggars should not

be allowed to remain in places where they are likely to cause obstruction to traffic, but some suitable place or places should be reserved for them so that those who are charitably minded may go there and distribute alms.

(6) I have already said that a number of watch towers had been erected. It is obvious that on such occasions watch towers are absolutely necessary, but unfortunately the watch towers that had been put up in the last Kumbha served no useful purpose. In the first place, they were inadequately staffed. On ordinary days, the staff consisted of one head constable and three constables and, on peak days, a Sub-Inspector was added. They all belonged to the Provincial Armed Constabulary. A staff of this description could not possibly function properly. The most important of the watch towers which had been constructed were those at the Sangam and on the Bandh near the two ramps, specially the latter. A carefully selected non-gazetted officer, at least of the rank of Sub-Inspector, should have been posted on these towers on all days, and on the peak days, specially on the Amavasya day, a competent gazetted officer of the rank of Superintendent of Police should have been deputed. As a matter of fact, the situation on the Amavasya day in the last Kumbha was such that the presence of an experienced Deputy Inspector General of Police was required on each of the two watch towers on the Bandh. In the second place, control stations, fully equipped with wireless and telephone and adequately staffed, should have been established at intervals of about a furlong each for about a mile and a half to the west of the Bandh on the routes along which the main streams of the pedestrian traffic were expected to pass. In the absence of such control stations, the watch towers on the Bandh could serve no useful purpose for controlling the movement of the crowds. My suggestion is that the point mentioned in this paragraph should be kept in view in future.

(7) The idea of having a properly equipped Central Control Room is excellent, but such a Control Room should be a Control Room and nothing else. The Central Control Room in the last Kumbha Mela appears to have served many other purposes. For example, it seems to have been used as a sort of a general office, as a place for holding meetings and as the room to which members of the public, seeking information or wanting to meet any of the mela officials, could come. This is not right. I would, further, suggest that the feasibility and propriety of having the Central Control Room at a suitable spot,

commanding a view of the mela area, inside the Fort be considered. I would also suggest that, on the occasions of such big fairs, the military authorities should be requested to lend the necessary personnel to be placed on duty on the more important of the watch towers, at the control stations and in the Central Control Room.

It may be mentioned here that it appears from Mr. Lovett's report on the 1906 Kumbha that one of the signalling stations established in that mela was located on the south-east bastion of the Fort and that signallers were provided by the army (South Staffords and Bhopal Light Infantry).

I am, further, of opinion that, in addition to telephone and wireless, arrangements for flag and heliograph signals should also be made. The telephones often went wrong during the last Kumbha Mela and the wireless also at times did not work.

GENERAL—(i) I have no hesitation in saying that the police force which was made available to the mela authorities was inadequate. At least one thousand more constables and at least three hundred more police sawars should have been supplied. I am not forgetting that the total strength of mounted police in this State, as stated by Sri J. P. Tripathi, is about one hundred and seventy-five. More sawars should be borrowed from one or more of the neighbouring States of Vindhya Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. The entire police force — mounted as well as foot — should, as I have already said, be placed at the disposal of the head of the mela police, at the latest, by the end of September preceding the mela. No constables of the Provincial Armed Constabulary should be posted on traffic control duty in the mela. Only tall, stalwart men, wearing turbans of a distinctive colour, which may be noticeable in the densest crowd, should be posted. All the members of the police force deputed to the mela should be given special training in being kind and courteous to the pilgrims, specially to those coming from the villages. It must be impressed upon them that the old and the infirm, specially women, must receive particular attention. It is, perhaps, a pity that, as the result of mechanisation, the strength of mounted police has been reduced everywhere. It admits of no doubt, however, that, for controlling large crowds, mounted men are far more effective than those standing on the ground. In his report on the 1906 Kumbha, Mr. Lovett emphasises more than once "the priceless value of mounted men on such occasions" He goes on to say : "While the foot police

were lost among the crowd, confused by the din and pressure and therefore largely useless, the mounted police and cavalry sawars under considerate and intelligent leadership did splendid service." He also speaks of "breakwaters" of mounted men being arranged at interval along the roads for controlling the crowds. It appears to me that conditions on the Amavasya day in the last Kumbha would have been much better than they were if more mounted men had been available and such "breakwaters" had been arranged at suitable intervals for about a mile on the roads leading from the town to the Bandh, on that portion of Triveni Road which lies between Jawahar Lal Nehru Road and the Bandh and again in the Sangam area from Ramp no. 1 up to the Sangam.

It was unfortunate that a larger police force than the one supplied could not be made available for duty in the last Kumbha. It appears to me that the responsibility for this lay with those above Sri J. P. Tripathi in the Police Department. At first, he stolidly maintained that he had got all the police force that he had asked for. Evidently, discipline and official etiquette made him say that. On the last day of his examination, however, when he was questioned as to the desirability of a larger police force having been deputed to the mela, he said in an unguarded moment : "It was with some difficulty that I got a force of 2,882, besides 250 chowkidars and the force deputed to the inoculation barriers which was about 550. It was not possible to ask for a larger force." This, in my opinion, was not right. An able and dependable officer should be selected to be the head of the mela police ; but, when once he has been appointed, his requirements should be met without any objection.

I am, further, of the opinion that the Inspector General of Police and some of the Deputy Inspectors General should have been present on horseback, constantly moving about in the Parade and the Sangam sectors on the Amavasya day. Of the Deputy Inspectors General, only one, Chaudhary Kripal Singh, was in the mela area on the Amavasya day. That, in my opinion, was not sufficient. The presence of high officers on such occasions has a psychological effect which is of considerable value. As matters stood on the Amavasya day, Sri J. P. Tripathi stationed himself roundabout a certain spot in the Sangam area with the object of supervising the passage of the Akhára processions, and Sri Agha Mohiuddin Shah, Additional Superintendent of Police, stayed in the Police Headquarters tent near telephone no. 3. The result was

that in the whole of the Parade and the Sangam sectors, only one superior and experienced police officer, viz. Chaudhary Kripal Singh, was left to go about and supervise, guide and direct.

(ii) It appears to me that there are reasons to believe that the voluntary organisations were not utilised properly. There are indications of the fact that some of the reputable organisations were not treated with the courtesy and consideration that they deserve. Take, for example, the case of the All-India Seva Samiti and its sister organisation, the Bharat Scouts and Guides. The venerable Pandit Sri Ram Bajpai and Sri Sri Ram Bharatya have been examined as the representatives of these institutions. The deposition of Pandit Sri Ram Bajpai left the impression on my mind that the relations between, at least, some of the officials and some of the voluntary organisations were not happy. I need refer to only one portion of his statement. He stated that on the 25th January, 1954, he felt that there was a certain important point of view which should be placed before the authorities. Instead of trying to contact them himself, he explained his point to Sri B. N. Lahiri, Retired Inspector General of Police, and the latter asked him to put his suggestions before the mela authorities. Sri Bajpai states : "I told him that they would not listen to me and requested Mr. Lahiri to give that advice to the mela authorities". The question is not whether Sri Bajpai's opinion on that particular point was correct or not. That a highly respected and veteran social worker like Pandit Sri Ram Bajpai should have felt that the authorities would not listen to him is, to my mind, deplorable. It, further, seems to me that some of these organisations felt that the authorities were not treating all of them on an equal footing and that some partiality was being shown to some of the organisations. This naturally gave rise to irritation and tension. It has also been stated before us that there was rivalry among the various bodies working in this field. The question, again, is not whether this feeling was well-founded. The point is that the authorities should not have done anything which was likely to give rise to such a feeling in the minds of workers of organisations like the All-India Seva Samiti and the University Social Service League. There is a time-honoured dictum which is well known to those engaged in the work of administration of justice. Lord Chief Justice Hewart put it thus : "It is not merely of some importance but is of fundamental importance that justice should not only be done, but should manifestly and undoubtedly be seen to be

done.” — (The King *versus* Sussex Justices, *ex parte* McCarthy, 1924, 1 K. B. 256). The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in England have also emphasised this doctrine more than once. My suggestion to all officials is that they should also be guided by this principle. It is not enough that they are just and impartial ; it is also necessary that they do not do anything which is likely to give rise to a suspicion that they have not been just and impartial.

I recommend further that there should, on all such occasions, be a committee entrusted with the task of co-ordinating the work of all the volunteer organisations and of looking after them.

(iii) It has also been stated before us that there was not proper co-ordination between the various official departments. My recommendation is that care should be taken in future that there is complete co-ordination between the various departments.

(iv) The Enquiry Offices that had been established in the last Kumbha Mela did not function properly. They appear to have been entirely in the charge of policemen many of whom were unable to supply the required information on the ground that they had only recently arrived and had no knowledge. My recommendation is that, in future, Enquiry Offices should be entrusted entirely to reliable volunteer organisations and should be manned by experienced workers belonging to those organisations.

In this connection, I should also like to emphasise that every policeman in the mela should know by heart the topography of the mela area and should be able to furnish information at once.

(v) I, further, suggest that all sign-boards in the mela area should be in simple and easily intelligible language. For example, hospitals should have the sign-board “Aspatal” (अस्पताल) which has become a Hindi word understood by the simplest villager— and not “Chikitsalaya” (चिकित्सालय) or “Svasthya Vibhag Shivar” (स्वास्थ्य विभाग शिविर).

Mahant Sri Kishore Das Ji has also stated that the sign-posts bearing the names of roads in the mela area like “Vikramaditya Marg” (विक्रमादित्य मार्ग) or “Ashok Path” (अशोक पथ), were of no help even to educated people because there was no indication as to the camps, etc. that were situated on those roads. It seems to me that the best course would be to fix up boards on all crossings, like the boards which are

to be found in the hill stations, giving the names of the camps, etc. situated on the roads branching off from those crossings.

(vi) I now come to a matter which, in my opinion, requires immediate attention. All over the Bandh and in its neighbourhood numerous structures of all kinds have been erected and they certainly constitute serious obstruction to traffic. It appears to me that they are all encroachments upon land belonging to Government and I find it difficult to understand how these encroachments have been allowed to be made. Apart from other considerations, the whole of this land forms part of a military area and it is not right that any portion of it should be occupied by persons who have no business to be there. During our numerous inspections of the locality we have found that constructions are still going on, and a few constructions have even come into existence since the last Kumbha Mela. I would strongly urge upon Government—State as well as Central—to take all necessary steps to have these encroachments removed as soon as possible and to have further constructions stopped immediately.

(vii) One highly undesirable result of the erection of these structures is that those who construct them take earth from the land lying immediately to the east of the Bandh. That is how numerous ditches have come into existence all over that area and the ditch, situated immediately to the north of Ramp no. 1, which played so prominent a part in the tragedy on the 3rd of February last, was one of such ditches. I suggest that no time should be lost in stopping the digging of these ditches.

(viii) Considerable confusion was created in the last Kumbha by the circumstance that a large number of loudspeakers were in action practically the whole time. It appears that on the day of the tragedy people found it difficult to hear the announcements made by the authorities because of the noise made by other loudspeakers. My recommendation is that in future appropriate rules should be laid down about the working of loudspeakers. On important bathing days no loudspeakers other than those of the traffic control department should, in my opinion, be allowed to be used, say, for twenty-four hours—midnight to midnight. On other days also loudspeakers should be allowed to be in action only during certain specified hours.



(d) *Training of the Ganga.*

There can be no doubt that the permanent solution of all difficulties connected with the planning of the mela area lies in the training of the river Ganga so that she may always leave ample land between her western bank and the Bandh. It appears, however, that experts do not consider it practicable — at any rate, for the present. My learned colleague, Sri A. C. Mitra, has agreed to write a note on the subject. It will be made part of this Report as Appendix A.

## VI—SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. (a) Prayága has, from ancient times, been regarded as the premier place of pilgrimage in Bharatvarsh and has been called *Tirtharaj* — the king among places of pilgrimage. The residents of this country have always been great lovers of water, specially of rivers. The rivers Ganga and Yamuna are highly venerated and greatly loved. They meet at Prayága. The performance of religious ceremonies at the confluence of rivers is considered highly efficacious. It is believed, that, at Prayága, there is a confluence of three rivers, the Ganga, the Yamuna and the Saraswati. The Ganga and the Yamuna are visible while the Saraswati is not, but there are some grounds for believing that at one time a third river also existed here and joined the Ganga and the Yamuna at their confluence. *Tirtha-yatra* (pilgrimage to a sacred place) is one of the steps laid down in the scriptures for the attainment of salvation and, in course of time, great emphasis came to be laid upon it because it is the only method which can be followed by all. Thus, gradually the belief spread that a pilgrimage to Prayága and bathing in the Sangam (confluence) were highly meritorious acts from the religious point of view. As the knowledge of astrology increased, it came to be believed that this pilgrimage and bathing acquired special merit if they were performed during the month in which the Sun remains in the Makara Rashi (the sign of Capricornus) and that the most important day was the Amávasyá during that month because on that day the Sun and the Moon were of equal degree (*ansha*) in Makara Rashi. This month was known as the month of Makara Snan. For various astrological reasons, a further development took place, namely, that every twelve years — and sometimes after an interval of eleven years — the conjunction of the planets was such that the pilgrimage and the bathing acquired still greater merit and this Makara Snan was called Kumbha Snan.

In course of time, evidently as the number of pilgrims increased, Makara and Kumbha Snans brought into existence a bathing festival or fair which was popularly known as the Magha Mela, when it was the annual Makara Snan, and Kumbha Mela, on the occasion of the Kumbha Snan. Whenever such large gatherings take place—whatever be the religious persuasion of the people attending them—it becomes the duty of the Government of the day to make appropriate arrangements for law and order and for the prevention of accidents, epidemics, etc. Furthermore, when such gatherings are held in a locality which is normally uninhabited, as is the case with the Magha and Kumbha fairs, difficult problems as to accommodation, supply of food and water, sanitation, medical attendance, traffic control, etc. also arise. Midway between two Kumbhs the mela is called Ardha-Kumbha. The attendance at an Ardha-Kumbha is larger than that at an ordinary annual Magha Mela and the attendance at a Kumbha is much larger than that at an Ardha-Kumbha. During the last 400 or 500 years certain organisations of Sadhus, called Akharas, have come into existence and a practice has grown up under which, in the Ardha-Kumbha and the Kumbha Melas, eight of the Akhárás are allowed to go to the Sangam in procession, with elephants, horses, camels, and in recent times, motor cars, and other paraphernalia, on the three important bathing days (Sankranti, Amávasyá and Vasanta Panchami). A Kumbha Mela took place in January-February, 1954 and, for various astrological and religious reasons, it was believed that the pilgrimage and the bathing on the occasion of this Kumbha would be of special significance and that a Kumbha of such sanctity would not occur again for more than 100 years. (Pages 12—24 and 30—33).

(b) A belief in the religious efficacy of pilgrimage to Prayága and bathing in the Sangam is strong, genuine, old and widespread, and these gatherings are an integral part of the culture of our country. It will not be proper for the Government to take any active steps for preventing people from coming to these melas on the ground that it would be difficult for its officials to control a large concourse. (Pages 87—88).

2. Maps marked I and II, which are annexed to this Report, will show, respectively, the topography of the town of Allahabad and that of the locality where the mela is held. There is a Fort in the

vicinity of the Sangam. There is also an embankment, called a Bandh, extending for several miles from the north-east corner of the Fort in a northerly and north-westerly direction until it reaches that **part of the Old Cantonment** where Prayága Railway Station is situated (*vide* maps I and II). The river Ganga keeps changing her course and thus the position of her channel is very important in connection with the arrangements which have to be made for these melas. If the land between the Ganga and the Bandh is large in area, the task of the authorities is, comparatively speaking, easy but, if the area is small, the authorities have considerable difficulty in planning the mela. The chief importance of this land lies in the fact that all the pilgrims and the Akhára processions have to pass through it on their way to the Sangam. The position of the Sangam also is not constant, for it depends on the position of the channel of the Ganga. The land between the Ganga and the Bandh at the time of the Kumbha in January-February last was very small in area. The Bandh and the entire land lying to its west and bounded on the north by the Grand Trunk Road and on the south by the Yamuna, and stretching on the west up to the Minto Park and the Cemetery Road, belong to the Military Department, being part of the Fort Cantonment (Map I). The land to the west of the Bandh is known as the Parade. The major portion of the crowd approaches the Bandh, on its way to the Sangam, from the west. The top of the Bandh is metalled and is called the Bund Road, and the two sides are sloping. Map II shows Triveni Road and Kali Sarak which come up to the Bandh. The portions of the eastern slope of the Bandh which are opposite these two roads have been described as Ramp no. 1 and Ramp no. 2 respectively. (Pages 24—30).

3. The fact that the 1954 Kumbha would be of special significance was not known to the Uttar Pradesh Government or to the vast majority of the members of the public until a few months before the mela was due to start. When the Government was made aware of this fact, it did all that could possibly be done to make the mela a success. Delay, however, had unfortunately occurred in the commencement of the preparations for, and the organisation of, the mela and real, serious, practical work could not commence before the third or the fourth week of November, 1953. Another unfortunate circumstance was that almost all the principal administrative officers of Allahabad had been changed by the beginning of September, 1953. The

mela officials worked day and night, but they were greatly handicapped by the shortness of the time at their disposal. (Pages 35—55 and 89—96).

4. There were certain circumstances which may be described as the predisposing causes of the tragedy. Briefly, they were these:—

(a) The cancellation, only a few days before the 3rd February, 1954, of the order directing that from the 7th January to the 8th February, 1954, no one could enter Allahabad and its suburbs unless he had been inoculated against cholera on a date not prior to the 1st November, 1953. Presumably this was the main cause of the sudden influx into the mela of an unprecedentedly large crowd for the Amávasyá Snan on the 3rd February, 1954. The mela officials do not appear to have been prepared for the sudden arrival of such a large crowd, particularly because the attendance on the 14th January, and the 19th January had led them to believe that the attendance on the 3rd February, 1954, also would not be very large.

(b) Only one route for ingress, viz. that part of Triveni Road which lies between Jawaharlal Nehru Road (Fort Road) and the Bandh, was prescribed for the major portion of the crowd, namely that coming from the main parts of the town. The result was that the crowd on this road on the morning of the 3rd February, 1954, was so dense that, by the time people reached the Bandh and the slope beyond it (Ramp no. 1), they were in a state of exhaustion and suffocation. The density of the crowd prevented them from getting out and the irresistible pressure from behind forced them onwards.

(c) The Northern Railway had established a station, called the Sangam Station, in the Parade area on the land immediately to the north of Triveni Road. Its enclosure occupied a great deal of the open space available there and its eastern boundary was in close proximity to the Bandh. The time-tables of the various railways had become upset with the result that trains kept arriving at the metre-gauge Daraganj Station and the broad-gauge Prayága Ghat and Sangam stations even on the morning of the 3rd February, with the result that the passengers arriving by these trains rushed off with their luggage for the

Sangam immediately after leaving the trains. When they and their coolies got into the crush, they threw down their packages which became stumbling blocks for the people in the crowd.

(d) All the open spaces, that were available outside the compounds of the Sangam Station, the Military Depot and the Agriculture Department Farm, were covered up by all sorts of camps and shops, etc.

(e) All the open spaces in the Sangam area (particularly that part of the land between the Ganga and the Bandh which is to the south of Ramp no. 1) also were covered by numerous camps.

(f) There had been rain on the 2nd February, and also during the night preceding the 3rd February. Although clinker had been spread, the surface of Ramp no. 1 and of the land in the immediate neighbourhood of its toe was still slippery.

(g) There were several ditches between Ramps nos. 1 and 2. Although the majority of them had been filled up, the big ditch, situated immediately to the north of Ramp no. 1, had remained unfilled and there was water in it and the surrounding land was full of slush and mud. This ditch played a prominent part in the tragedy that occurred.

(h) The routes prescribed for the Akhara processions and the pedestrians intersected one another in the Sangam area below Ramp no. 1. This led to a dangerous situation.

(i) The policemen, who had been posted on Triveni Road and other crucial places for controlling the crowd, belonged to the Provincial Armed Constabulary who do not wear turbans. They got lost in the crowd and became helpless and useless.  
(Pages 33—36)

5. The immediate cause of the tragedy was obstruction, caused at the junction of Mahabirji Temple Road with Ramp no. 1. to the crowd of pilgrims rushing down the ramp, by the first Akhara procession which was returning from the Sangam after bathing. It happened like this. The first procession reached the Sangam according to the prescribed schedule about 6.50 a.m. It should have started on its return journey at 7.45 a.m. and should have reached the police

outpost near the junction of Mahabirji Temple Road and Ramp no. 1 at 8.05 a.m., but it actually reached there about 9 a.m. because the engines of the motor cars which were in the procession got overheated and their departure on the return journey was delayed by about an hour. This upset the time-tables of the processions, with the result that the second procession which, on its way to the Sangam, should have passed along the Sangam Road opposite Ramp no. 1 shortly after 7.20 a.m., actually arrived there about 9 o'clock when the first procession on its return journey from the Sangam had also reached the junction of Mahabirji Temple Road and Ramp no. 1. Thus, two processions were in front of Ramp no. 1 at that time. This unduly distracted the crowds on the Bund Road and the ramp and created dangerous congestions. The front portion of the first procession remained stationary in front of Ramp no. 1 for some time. There were two elephants in front of the ramp and there was a gap of about fifty paces between them. The crowd on the ramp, finding it impossible to bear any longer the pressure from behind, started rushing through the gap between the two elephants. This sudden onrush of the crowd from the ramp created a panic in the crowd to the east of the procession and many people fell down and were trampled upon. The front portion of the returning procession then passed along and the people held up on the ramp were able to move on. A little later, however, the rear portion of that procession, consisting of 50—60 Nagas (naked Sadhus), which had, somehow or other, become separated from the front portion, approached the junction of Mahabirji Temple Road and Ramp no. 1 and the passage of the pilgrims going down the slope was again obstructed. Unable to bear the intolerable pressure from behind, some of the pilgrims attempted to cross the road on which the Nagas had to proceed. This was resented by the Nagas and one of them attacked one of the pilgrims with his Chimta (long iron tongs) and threw him back into the crowd. This spread terror among the pilgrims and a clash ensued between some of the pilgrims and the Nagas. The Nagas then started attacking the crowd with their Chimtas with the result that the crowd became panic-stricken and ran helter-skelter in all directions for safety. Many villagers who had lathis attacked the fleeing crowd with their lathis in order to save themselves and several pilgrims received injuries. A frightful stampede ensued. Immediately to the north of the bottom of Ramp no. 1 was the big ditch mentioned above and that was the one

direction in which the pilgrims who were running away from Ramp no. 1 could escape. The ground round about the ditch, however, was occupied by a number of Sadhus, pilgrims and beggars. These Sadhus assaulted the people who were rushing in that direction with their Chimtas. This intensified the stampede and many people fell down and crushed the pilgrims and the beggars who were sitting on the ground and were themselves trampled upon by others who followed them. (Pages 65—74).

6. The recommendations for the future are as follows :—

(a) The relevant departments of Government should start paying attention to the arrangements for an ensuing Kumbha well in advance. To take a concrete example, the next Kumbha is due to take place in 1966, unless it is decided that it should be held in 1965. Some time towards the middle of the year 1963 the Pandits should be consulted as to whether the Kumbha will be held in 1966 or 1965. This will give ample time to Government for making necessary arrangements even if the mela is to take place in 1965. Proceeding on the footing that the mela will take place in 1966, I suggest that, if the District Magistrate of Allahabad at that time is an officer in whose ability the Government have complete confidence, he should be kept at Allahabad until the mela is over and the report and the accounts of the mela have been finalised. If a change is considered necessary, the new District Magistrate should be posted not later than the middle of 1964 at the latest. A competent officer of the Additional District Magistrate's grade should be selected to be the Officer-in-Charge of the forthcoming Kumbha. If he is already at Allahabad, he should not be transferred until after the complete winding up of all the affairs of the ensuing Kumbha. If he is not at Allahabad, he should be posted there as Additional District Magistrate not later than the middle of 1964. He should be told that he would have to undertake the entire responsibility of the forthcoming Kumbha. He should be, not only in theory, but in actual fact, the executive head of the mela. The District Magistrate should exercise only supervisory control. About June or July, 1965 the District Magistrate should start relieving this officer of his magisterial work and, by the beginning of August 1965, the Additional District Magistrate

should be entirely relieved of all other work and should be enabled to devote himself exclusively to the work of the planning and the organisation of the mela. Of course, if the mela is to take place in 1965, the arrangements will have to be expedited so that the mela officials may get not less than six or seven months for doing their work. All the other officers who have to work in the mela should also be selected by the beginning of July of the year preceding the Kumbha and ordered to proceed to Allahabad and to take up their duties as soon as possible. The police force should be made available at the latest by the end of September. (Pages 89—95).

(b) Compulsory inoculation against cholera should be imposed and should be kept in force for the duration of the mela. The Report of the Sub-Committee appointed in 1939 by the Central Advisory Board of Health, to examine the possibility of introducing a system of compulsory inoculation of pilgrims against cholera, dated the 29th June, 1939, deserves consideration. The feasibility of introducing compulsory inoculation against cholera in the manner in which vaccination against small-pox is enforced should be considered.

In the meantime, the compulsory inoculation of pilgrims should be enforced and facilities should be provided for inoculating them in their own villages and towns before they start for Allahabad. Care should be taken in selecting the staff to be posted at the barriers set up round about Allahabad for examining the inoculation certificates of the pilgrims, so that the pilgrims are not harassed. (Pages 95-96).

(c) No railway station should be established in the mela area. A new and larger building should be constructed for the Allahabad Junction Station. It should be so designed as to provide all necessary facilities for dealing with large crowds. If it is not possible to construct such a new building at the site where the present junction station is situated, it should be built at a suitable place further to the west or further to the east. (Pages 97—101).

(d) The whole of the Parade and the Sangam areas should be kept open. The military authorities should be requested to remove their Salvage Depot, Stores, etc. to some other suitable



locality. The Agriculture Department should be requested to remove their farm to some other place. (Pages 101—103).

(e) Four roads, including Kali Sarak, all lying to the north of Triveni Road, should be provided for incoming crowds, and four roads, including Triveni Road, should be provided for outgoing crowds. The essential administrative offices, hospitals, etc. required for the Parade area should be located to the north and to the south of the two sets of roads just mentioned. Properly constructed ramps, having easy gradients, should be provided on both sides of the Bandh in front of all these roads. (Page 102)

(f) The provision of roads in the Sangam area, being dependent on the width of the land available between the Ganga and the Bandh, suitable steps should be taken in accordance with the conditions prevailing in any particular year.

(g) Whenever the limited character of the land between the Ganga and the Bandh makes it necessary to do so, the route for the Akhara processions either on the outward journey to the Sangam, or both for going to and returning from the Sangam, should be provided to the east of the river. Necessary pontoon bridges for enabling the processions to reach the Sangam and for their return should be built at suitable places. (Page 102).

(h) The minimum of essential camps, e.g. a first-aid post, and a police outpost, should be located in the Sangam area and they should occupy the minimum of space. No residential or rest camps, official or non-official, should be allowed in the Sangam area. Necessary number of takhts for the Pragwals and the necessary amount of space for the Barbers' enclosure should be allowed. One shop, selling flowers, should be allowed. (Pages 102-103).

(i) The routes prescribed for the Akhára processions and those for the pedestrian traffic should be so planned that they do not intersect one another. Strong impregnable barriers should be constructed between the Akhára procession routes and the pedestrian routes. (Pages 103-104).

(j) The Akhárás should not be pampered. All their reasonable demands should be met, but a policy of appeasement should

not be followed. Elephants, horses, camels, motor cars and other paraphernalia should not be allowed in the processions. Nagas (naked Sadhus) should not be allowed to participate in the processions. The Mahants and other leaders of each group may be allowed to go in *tanjans* or palanquins or on *takhts* carried over the shoulders of men. A sustained and earnest effort should be made to persuade the Sadhus to realise their responsibilities, to put their house in order and to adopt the same procedure as was followed by the Sadhus in ancient times who used to go to the Sangam on foot, singing *bhajans* and chanting *mantras*. (Pages 104—107).

(k) Pilgrims and beggars should not be allowed to bivouac in the Sangam area. Ample and suitable free accommodation should be provided for those pilgrims who need it and satisfactory arrangements should be made for guiding such pilgrims to it. Beggars should not be allowed to remain in any place where they are likely to cause obstruction to traffic; some suitable place or places should be reserved for them. (Pages 107-108).

(l) The watch towers should be adequately staffed by properly trained men. A carefully selected non-gazetted officer, at least of the rank of a Sub-Inspector, and the necessary number of head constables and constables should be posted on these towers on ordinary days and, on peak days, specially on the Amávasyá day, a competent gazetted officer of the rank of Superintendent of Police should be deputed at least to the watch towers on the Bandh and at the Sangam. The watch towers on the Bandh should issue instructions to the control stations mentioned below. All watch towers should, of course, be in communication with the Control Room. (Page 108).

(m) On occasions like the last Kumbha Mela, control stations, fully equipped, not only with wireless and telephone, but also with heliograph and flag signalling arrangements, and adequately staffed, should be established at intervals of about a furlong each for about a mile and a half to the west of the Bandh on the routes along which the main streams of pedestrian traffic are expected to pass. They should be controlled by the watch towers on the Bandh. (Page 108).

(n) A properly equipped Central Control Room should be established, but it should be a Control Room and nothing else.

The feasibility and propriety of locating the Central Control Room at a suitable spot, commanding a view of the mela area, inside the Fort should be considered. A competent officer of an appropriate rank should be placed in charge of the Control Room. (Pages 108-109).

(o) The military authorities should be requested to lend the necessary personnel to be placed on duty on the more important of the watch towers, at the Control stations and in the Central Control Room. (Page 109).

(p)(i) Adequate police force should be supplied for the mela. For example, for a gathering like the one that assembled on the occasion of the last Kumbha, the strength of the police force should not be less than four thousand.

(ii) Mounted police is absolutely necessary for the control of crowds. On an occasion like the last Kumbha Mela, the strength of the mounted police force should be about four hundred. Police Sawars should be borrowed on such occasions from the neighbouring States of Vindhya Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar.

(ii) The constables on duty should be tall, stalwart men wearing turbans of a distinctive colour.

(iv) All the members of the police force should be given special training in being kind and courteous specially to those coming from the villages. They should acquaint themselves fully with the topography of the mela area and should be able to answer questions promptly.

(v) It would be highly desirable if on occasions like the last Kumbha, specially on the Amávasyá day, the Inspector-General of Police and some of his Deputy Inspectors-General keep moving about on horseback in the Parade and the Sangam areas. (Pages 109—111).

(q) Voluntary organisations should be treated with courtesy consideration and tact, and their services should be fully utilised. There should be a committee entrusted with the task of co-ordinating the work of all the volunteer organisations and of looking after them. (Pages 111-112).

(r) Enquiry Offices should be entirely in the charge of reliable volunteer organisations and should be manned by experienced workers belonging to those organisations. (Page 112).

(s) Sign-boards should be in simple and easily intelligible language. In addition to sign posts giving the names of roads, there should be on all crossings boards mentioning the camps situated on each road like the boards which are to be found in the hill stations. (Pages 112-113).

(t) All necessary steps should be taken as soon as possible for the removal of all encroachments on the Bandh and in its neighbourhood. (Page 113).

(u) No one should be allowed to dig earth and to create ditches anywhere in the Sangam or in the Parade area. (Page 113).

(v) Appropriate rules should be laid down about the working of loudspeakers. On important bathing days no loudspeakers, other than those of the traffic control department, should be allowed to be used, say, for twenty-four hours, i.e. midnight to midnight. On other days also loudspeakers should be allowed to be in action only during certain specified hours. (Page 113).

## VII—CONCLUSION

Before parting with this Report, I wish to express once more our deep sense of obligation to the Hon'ble the Chief Justice and the Hon'ble Judges of the Allahabad High Court, for permitting us to use one of the Court rooms for our sittings. I need hardly say that, but for the assistance so kindly extended, we would have found it difficult to secure other suitable accommodation for our work.

The Committee has been fortunate in its Secretaries. The first Secretary, Sri Ram Bahadur Saxena, I.A.S., proved to be a zealous and hardworking officer. When he was appointed Secretary of this Committee, he was Additional District Magistrate of Allahabad and was put in charge of the work of the Committee in addition to his normal duties. The Additional District Magistrate of Allahabad is a very busy officer, but Sri Saxena was equal to the task. He is thorough as well as quick in his work and has been gifted with a temper that remains unruffled even in the most trying circumstances. He was subsequently appointed Joint Director of Industries with head-

quarters at Kanpur, and Sri Nand Prakash Watal, P.C.S., District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer, was appointed Secretary of the Committee. He has been equally competent and diligent, and there has been no occasion to feel that a new Secretary has been appointed.

A word of appreciation and praise is due to our office staff. I and my learned colleagues have been mostly concerned with the three stenographers, and I have no hesitation in saying that they have worked with zeal, devotion, loyalty and ability. They have throughout had to work hard, but they have performed their duties ungrudgingly and cheerfully. I am assured by the Secretary that the gentleman who has been working as part-time office clerk has also done his work well.

KAMALAKANTA VERMA.

2-12-1954.

I agree with the conclusions regarding the causes of the tragedy and the suggestions for the future, as summarised on pages 114 to 125 of the Chairman's report.

A. C. MITRA.

2-12-1954.

While not subscribing to everything in the Chairman's report, I generally agree with his main conclusions and suggestions for the future. I should like to add that the Sangam area, if it is small like at this year's Kumbh, should be kept open for the pilgrims ; the first-aid and police posts mentioned in the summary on page 121 can conveniently be put up on a suitable site on or near the embankment which forms the western boundary of the Sangam area. It is surprising that the Officer-in-charge should not have come to know of the tragedy (which occurred before 9 a.m.) until 1.30 p.m., and the District Magistrate until 2.30 p.m.

PANNA LALL.

3-12-1954.

## APPENDIX A

*Note by Sri A. C. MITRA, I.S.E., Chief Engineer, Irrigation Department, Uttar Pradesh.*

Immediately before joining the Yamuna at Prayag, the river Ganga flows north to south between the high ground on which Jhusi is situated on the east and the Daraganj spur, Fort and Bund on the west. The width available for the river in this reach is about 6,000 feet, the whole of which is required for passing very high floods.

2. In the dry weather, however, the stream is very much narrower and takes a course which normally lies more towards Jhusi side than towards Daraganj and Fort side. In such case, plenty of land is available between the Bund and the stream to enable the Magh and Kumbh Melas to be located entirely to the west of the Ganga, i.e. in inside Prayag which satisfies all the pilgrims including the Sadhus. The traffic problem also becomes much simpler as plenty of space is available for the pilgrims going to the Sangam to bathe as well as for the Akhára processions.

3. Occasionally, however, the dry weather course of the river moves westwards towards the Bund and leaves very little space in the Sangam area between the Bund and the river. This happened during the 1954 Kumbh and records show that in 1906 the situation of the river was similar. In such cases traffic congestion assumes serious proportions and accidents causing heavy casualties are liable to occur.

4. It has been suggested by some people that the river should be trained in such a way that the dry weather flow of the Ganga may always be kept well away from the Bund so that ample land may always be available between the river and the Bund. This could only be achieved by constructing a series of very strong stone spurs projecting at least 3 furlongs into the river from the Bund. As the entire width available between Jhusi and the Bund is required to pass the high floods in the river, the construction of spurs mentioned above would obstruct the flow of the river when it is in high flood. This would result either in washing away of the spurs or serious flooding upstream or undermining and erosion of Jhusi town. The spurs, if they are

designed to withstand the effects of a high flood, would have to be constructed entirely in stone with heavy protection against undermining, the cost of which would be out of proportion to the benefit to be derived once in 12 years during the period the dry weather course of the river comes close to the Bund. Besides, the existence of the spurs across the area between the Sangam and the river would obstruct the north to south traffic to the Sangam and would defeat the very purpose for which the dry weather course of the river is sought to be kept away from the Bund.

5. In view of the circumstances mentioned above, the training of the Ganga to ensure that the area of land available between the river and the Bund may always be ample for siting the Kumbh Mela in it is, in my opinion, not a practicable proposition.

A. C. MITRA.



## APPENDIX B

The photographs prepared by the Chal Chitra Kendra from the films of the movie camera are instructive from various points of view. Attention may be drawn to the following points :—

(a) Almost all the photographs show the density of the crowd and give an indication of the fact that a very large crowd had collected in an area which was not quite sufficient to hold it comfortably. Reference may be made to photographs nos. 3, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16 and 18.

(b) In most of the photographs an expression of helplessness is noticeable on the faces of the people in the crowd.

(c) The fact that many of the pilgrims carried bundles over their heads is shown by photographs nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14 and 16, particularly by nos. 1 and 4.

(d) The photographs nos. 1, 3, 4, 6 and 7 show that pilgrims had lathis in their hands. That the lathis were used can be gathered from photographs nos. 6 and 7, particularly the latter, in which the black-coated man, who appears to be perched on the Sangam Marg Gangapatti sign-board, is seen using his lathi.

(e) In photographs nos. 10 and 11 a mounted policeman is seen helping some one who had evidently fallen down. Photograph no. 11 shows the extent of his efforts.

(f) Photographs nos. 3, 8, 13 and 14 show that a number of people had climbed sign-boards and poles.

(g) It appears from photographs nos. 18, 19 and 20 that a stage arrived when the pilgrims and the Sadhu processions got mixed up.





सत्यमेव जयते

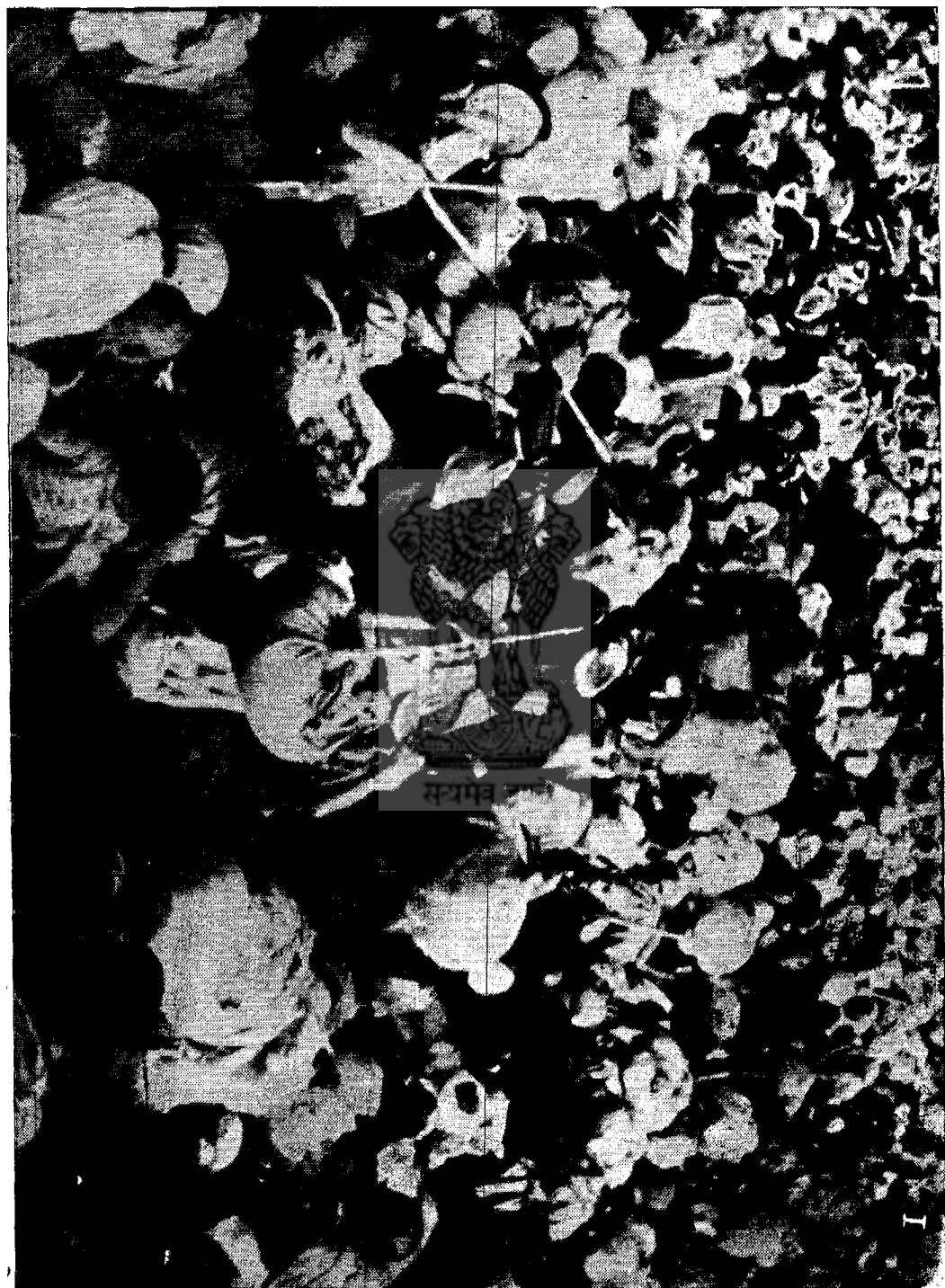




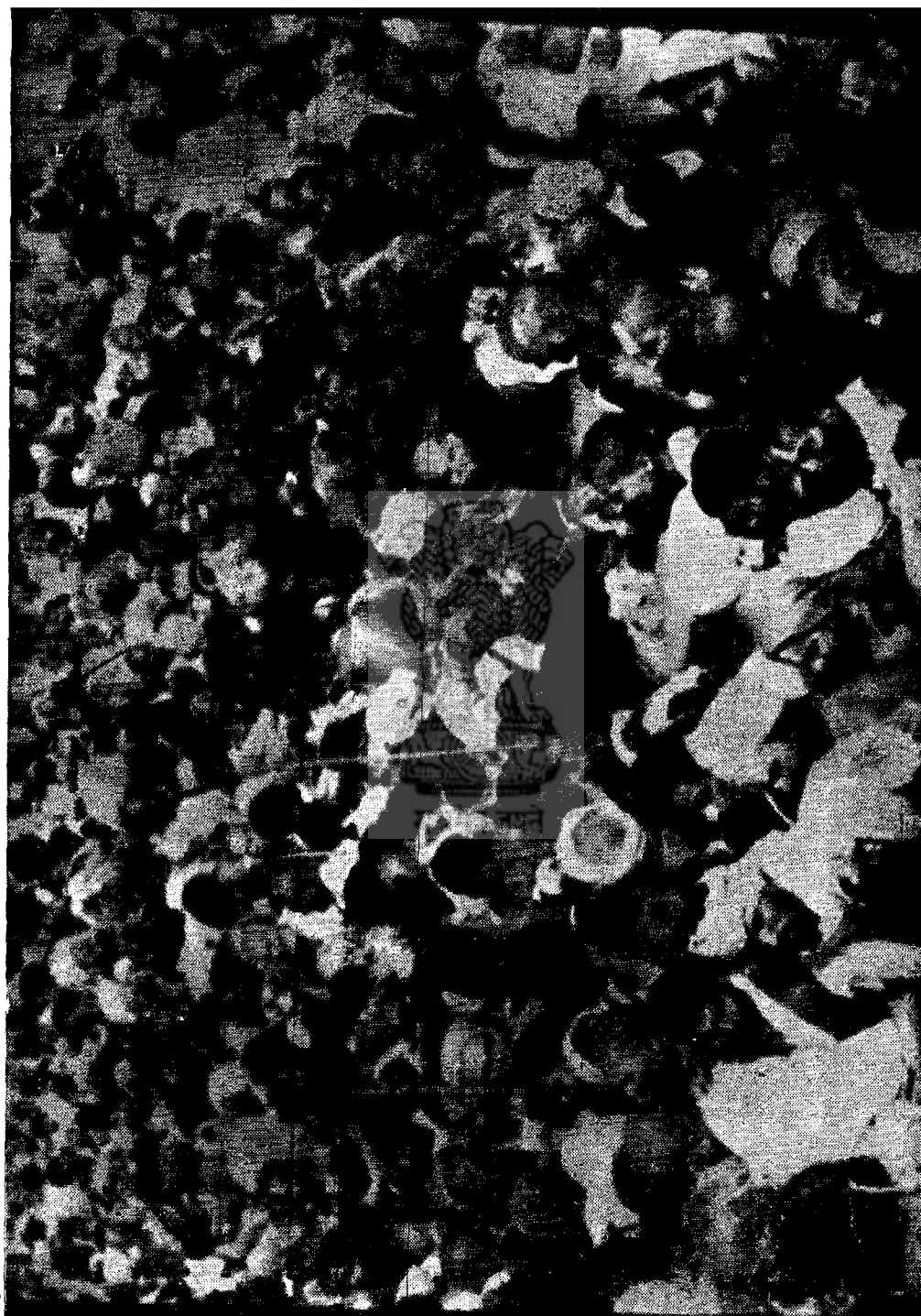
PLATE No. 3



PLATE No. 4



PLATE No. 5



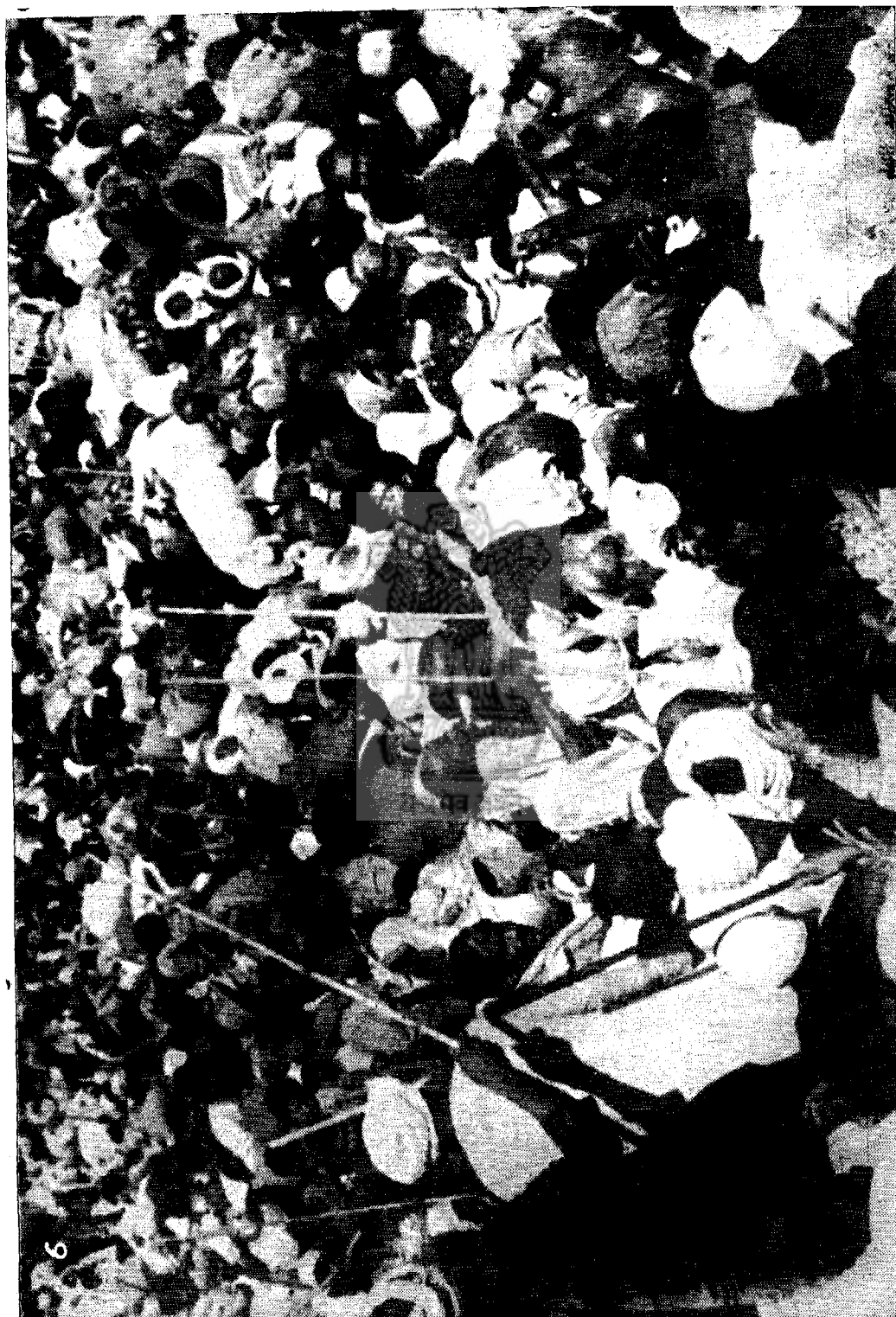
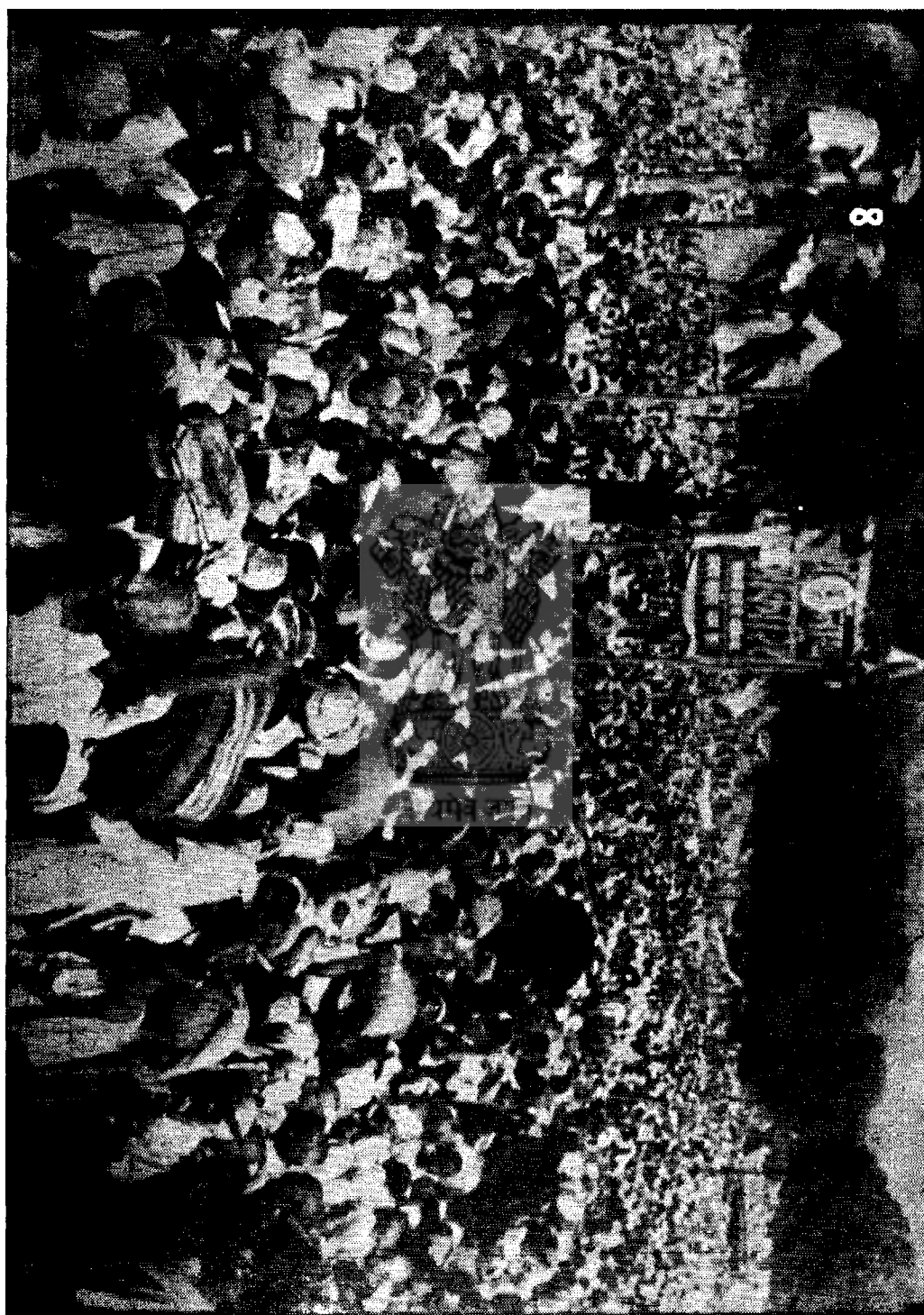




PLATE No. 7







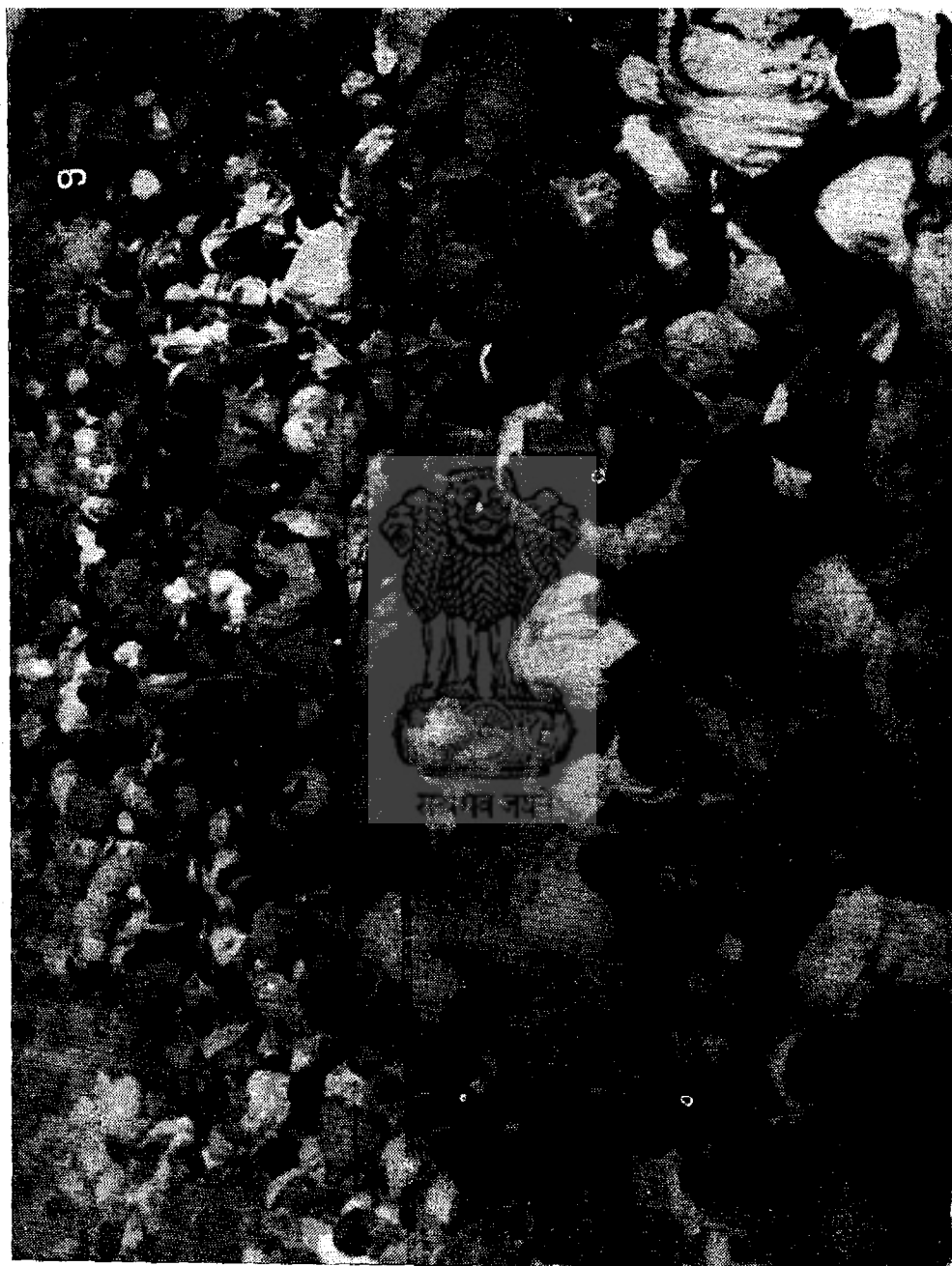
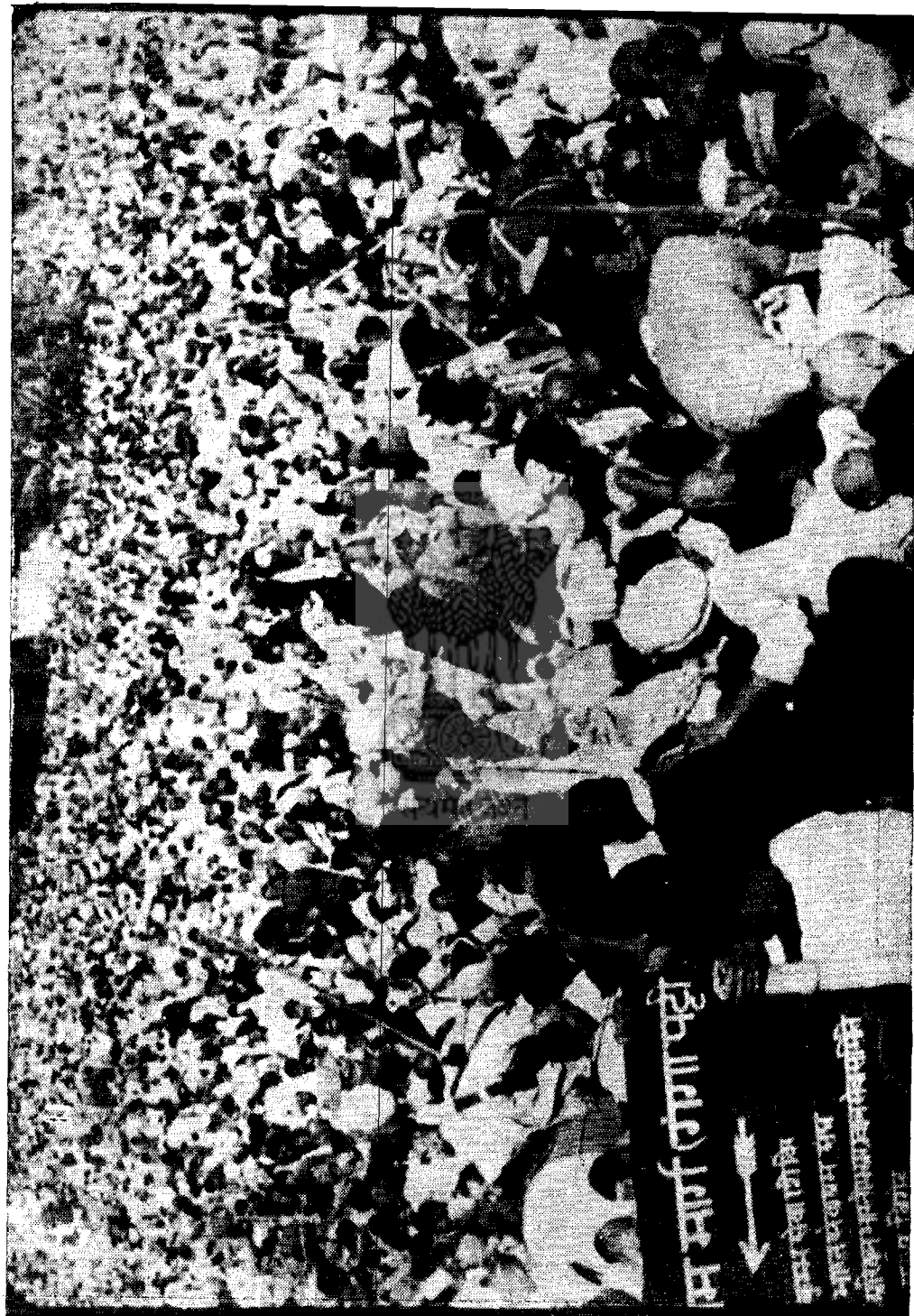
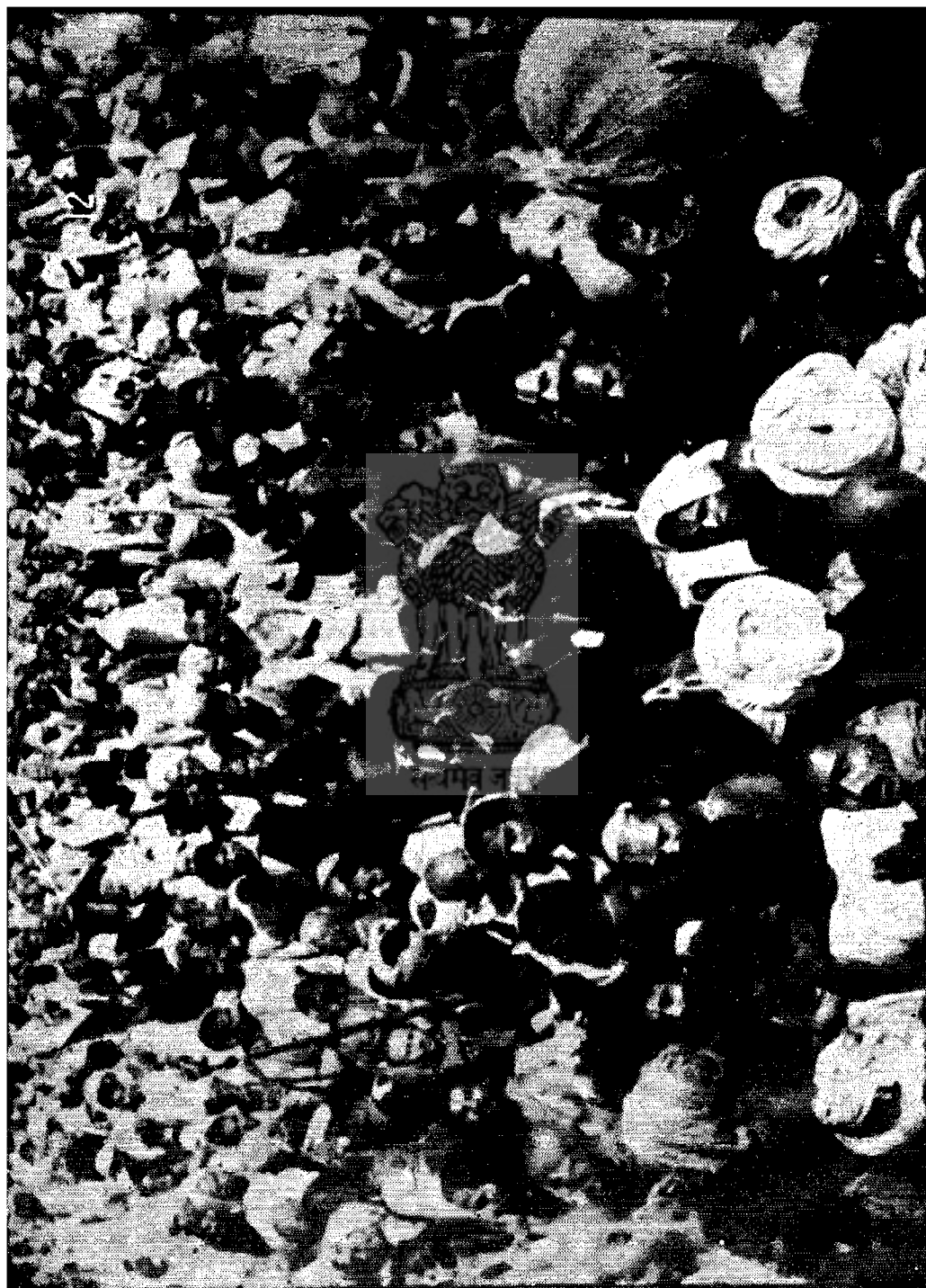
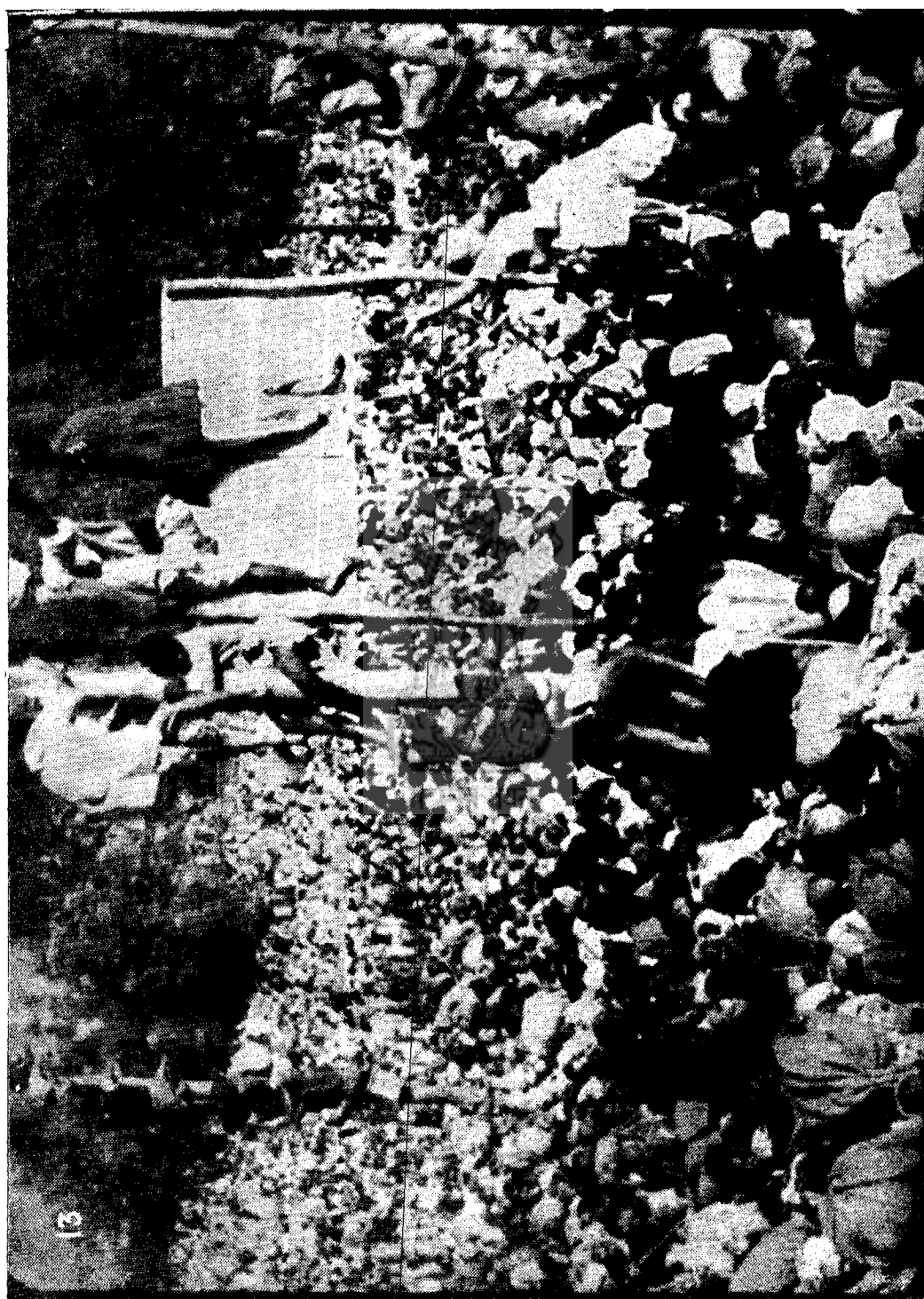




PLATE NO. 11











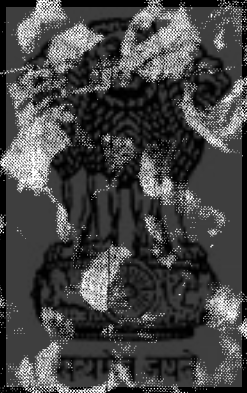






PLATE No. 17



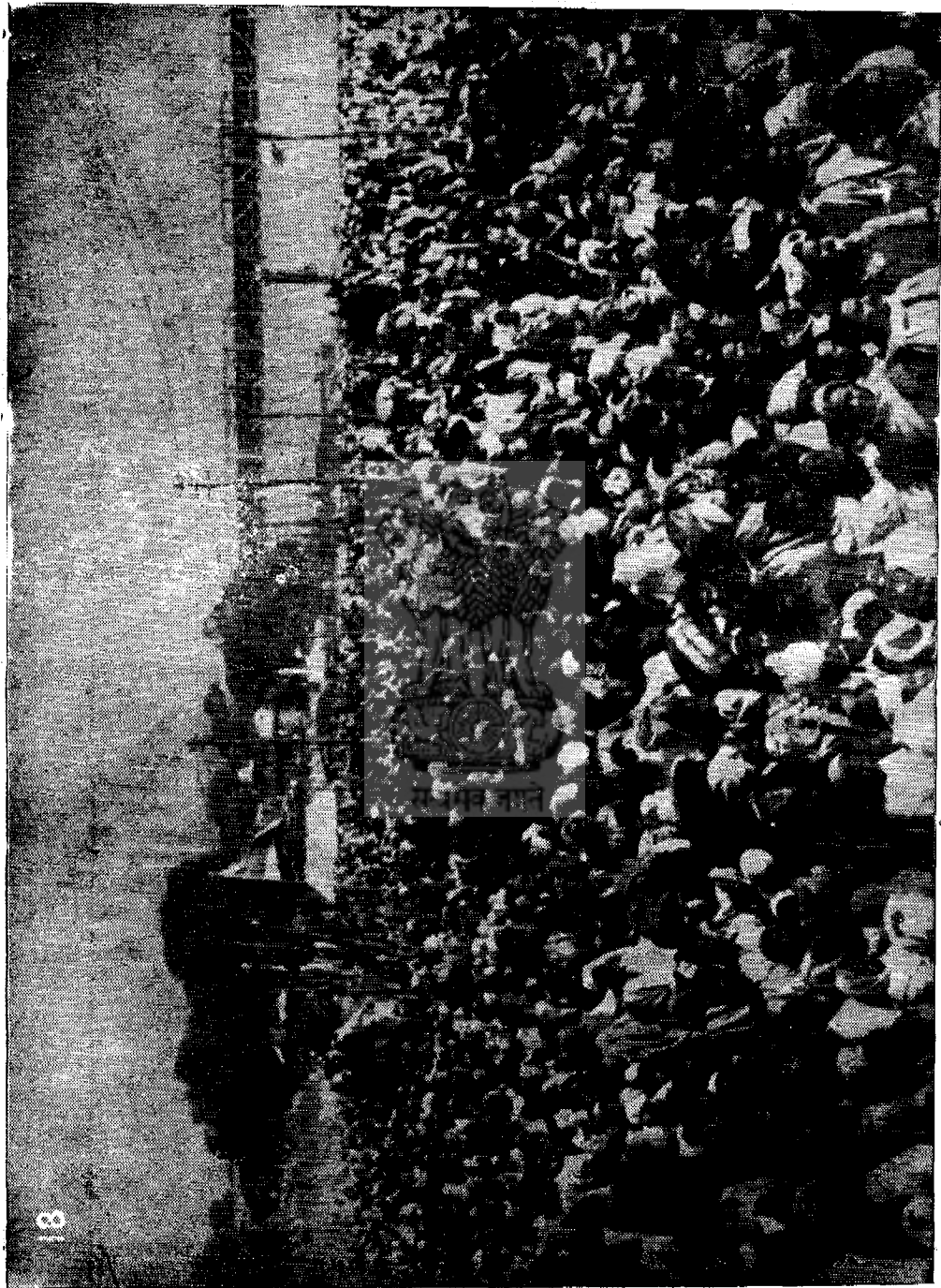


PLATE No. 19

